

THE AWARD-WINNING INDEPENDENT: EDITOR OF THE YEAR, CORRESPONDENT OF THE YEAR

THE INDEPENDENT

No 3,872

WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH 1999

(1R50p) 45p

BUSINESS REVIEW

YOUR THREE SECTION PAPER: 26-PAGE NEWS SECTION PLUS 12-PAGE BUSINESS SUPPLEMENT PLUS 18-PAGE BROADSHEET REVIEW

'Je ne regrette rien... perhaps I have been a little careless'

— Edith Cresson, French Commissioner

'I note with considerable satisfaction that I am whiter than white'

— Jacques Santer, EC President

'It's a disaster... and it requires ruthless determination to deal with'

— Sir Leon Brittan, EC vice-president

'The President of the Commission should leave as soon as possible'

— Tony Blair, British Prime Minister

Santer must go now — Blair

TONY BLAIR called last night for Jacques Santer to pay the price for the fraud and mismanagement exposed by the official inquiry into the European Commission by standing down immediately as President.

After an unrepentant Mr Santer told a Brussels press conference he was "whiter than white", Mr Blair told the Commons that the Commission's response to Monday's highly critical report had been "wholly inadequate".

In an emergency statement on the biggest crisis in the EU's history, the Prime Minister said: "The President of the Commission should leave as soon as reasonably and practically possible."

During two hours of talks in Downing Street last night, Mr Blair urged Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor and holder of the European Union's rotating presidency, to seek fast-track agreement on a successor to Mr Santer at a summit.

BY STEPHEN CASTLE and ANDREW GRICE

but he has publicly endorsed Romano Prodi, a former prime minister of Italy.

Privately, pro-EU British ministers fear the Brussels fiasco will harden British public opinion against the EU and joining the single currency.

But Mr Blair went on the offensive yesterday presenting a paper to Mr Schröder proposing "root and branch reform" to the way the Commission operates, including a crackdown on fraud, financial mismanagement and what Downing Street called the "jobs-for-the-boys culture" in Brussels.

One minister said: "The door is now open to radical reform in Europe. It is an argument we can win if we are bold enough. Reform is the only way the EU can recover its credibility."

Earlier, in Brussels, Mr Schröder said he wanted "to take a decision rapidly", and hinted that Mr Santer's role as caretaker president will be short-lived.

That followed an angry press conference at which Mr Santer declared himself to be "whiter than white", and attacked the conclusions of the report as "unbalanced". Mr Santer and several fellow commissioners were furious about the final chapter to the 144-page document which accused them of failing to accept political responsibility for the culture of corruption. He said the conclusions were "totally unjustified" and "shameful".

"I cannot accept this affirmation that the Commission has been responsible for fraud, irregularities and mismanagement," he said.

Edith Cresson, the commissioner most seriously criticised, volunteered: "Perhaps I have been a little careless."

Colleagues and adversaries moved quickly to slap down Mr Santer. The President of the European Parliament, Jose Maria Gil-Robles, backed the inquiry findings and demanded a quick solution to the crisis. He said: "No one in our countries could imagine that a government which stands down because it doesn't have parliamentary confidence could stay in place for another nine months until another government is elected."

Even Sir Leon said: "I don't think this is the time to carp at the content or civil at the wording of the report. It stands on its own merits."



Jacques Santer, who rejected the highly critical report into the European Commission as 'wholly inadequate' and declared himself 'whiter than white'

The last stand of the Burgermeister

mit of EU leaders in Berlin next week. But Mr Schröder warned that it could take longer to find an acceptable candidate.

The summit, which is due to agree a new EU funding system and reform the common agricultural policy, will now be overshadowed by the fiasco in Brussels.

Mr Blair believes the priority is to remove Mr Santer and install a successor who can drive through reforms to the EU. He opposes the idea of a caretaker president — such as Sir Leon Brittan, the Commission Vice-President — running the Commission until January, when Mr Santer's five-year term comes to an end.

Mr Blair said: "The new president must be a political heavyweight, capable of providing leadership and authority to the Commission." Downing Street refused to say whom Mr Blair was backing for the post.

IT WAS the Burgermeister's last stand, a final puffing of the petty functionary's chest, a valedictory outpouring of righteous indignation that anyone should have the impertinence to suggest that he might have failed in his job. It was also an unmitigated disaster.

When Jacques Santer took the rostrum in Brussels yesterday on the morning after the report of the night before, a touch of contrition from the Commission's President might

yet have earned forgiveness. Not, however, after a performance that gave the word "impertinence" new meaning.

"I reject the conclusions of the report," he declared for openers. "The picture is distorted... wholly unjustified." It was "a slur" on the reputation of 19,000 toiling and honest Eurocrats. And then the most breathtaking assertion of all, that the independent ex-

perts had found his own performance to be "whiter than white".

A curious proposition, to put it mildly, given how the report singled out Mr Santer in person for failing to take a "meaningful interest" in the Commission's Security Office, which had been permitted to turn into "a state within state".

It was the spluttering outrage of a mayor of a middle-sized city caught napping after one decent lunch too many —

which in a sense exactly describes the previous job experience of Jacques Santer, the one-time Prime Minister of the 350,000 good citizens of the little state of Luxembourg.

That Mr Santer was promoted so greatly beyond his station is to the credit of our own former prime minister John Major, who out of pique in 1994 vetoed the widely favoured candidacy of the Belgian Prime Minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene.

The current Prime Minister yesterday was not so supportive. "I will be blunt," said Mr Blair.

"We cannot have the next president decided in the same way as the last, debating the narrow interests of one country or another."

"The top jobs, not just in the Commission, but throughout the European institutions, should go to the top people. Merit and merit alone should decide," he said.

Tim

MY COMMISSIONER PRESIDENT TO BRUSSELS, AND ALL SHE GOT FOR WAS THIS LUMP OF!

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Australia	6.00 A\$	Israel	12.00 S\$
Canada	50.00 C\$	Japan	3,000 Y\$
France	100 FF	South Korea	600 W\$
Germany	2.50 DM	Spain	166 P\$
Greece	1.20 Dr	Sweden	75 SKr
India	115.12 Rs	Switzerland	2.00 S\$
Italy	200 L\$	Taiwan	20 NT\$
Netherlands	6.00 G\$	USA	50 C\$
Norway	75 Nkr	UK	35 P\$
Poland	19.00 Z\$	Yugoslavia	5.50 D\$
Portugal	200 Esc		
Romania	10.00 Lei		
Russia	15.00 R\$		
South Africa	5.00 R\$		
Spain	166 P\$		
Sweden	75 SKr		
Switzerland	2.00 S\$		
Taiwan	600 W\$		
USA	50 C\$		
UK	35 P\$		

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Europe is beheaded after

Prodi is the front-runner for presidency

ROMANO PRODI, the former Italian prime minister, and Javier Solana, Nato's secretary-general, emerged as early favourites to succeed Jacques Santer as European Commission president.

As European leaders came under pressure to choose his successor next week, he issued a strong defence of his tenure of office, and one which united MEPs in disbelief.

As jockeying for key posts began, it emerged that Mr Solana's prospects depend on winning the support of the Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar. The two men come from rival parties and personal relations between them are not close.

Mr Prodi has the backing of Massimo D'Alema, his successor as Prime Minister.

The field of candidates to take over from Mr Santer also includes Rudolf Scharping, Germany's Defence Minister, while outside possibilities include Wim Kok and Antonio Guterres, the Dutch and Portuguese Prime Ministers. Both are still in office and might find it difficult to extract themselves from their present posts.

Despite pressure from several countries, including Britain, for a quick resolution of the crisis, the timetable for the replacement of the Santer commission remains unclear. There is speculation that a temporary candidate may take over from Mr Santer and would then see the Commission through to the end of the year.

By STEPHEN CASTLE
in Brussels

That might leave the way open for senior figures such as Hans van den Broek, foreign affairs commissioner, or Sir Leon Brittan, Commission vice-president, although his prospects may suffer from the fact Britain is not a member of the single currency.

It is more likely a new president will be selected after an agreement by all 15 EU leaders, and that he or she will get a six-month mandate at first, with the expectation of a five-year term starting in 2000.

That could leave the way open for at least some of the current commissioners to stay on until the end of the year. Germany indicated yesterday that it wishes to see the present regime staying in place as caretakers until the June European elections. But that was opposed by the European Parliament, as MEPs are convinced the administration must be removed before they have to face the voters.

Whatever happens, the shape of the new Commission will be very different, and only a minority of those now in office are likely to return to Brussels. Neil Kinnock, the British transport commissioner, received the Government's backing for a second term of office. Sir Leon is due to step down at the end of December.

The list of those who face the axe includes Edith Cresson, former French prime minister



Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (right), current EU president, and Tony Blair at Downing Street yesterday. Mr Schröder appealed for calm on the EU

and commissioner for research and education, who was at the centre of the crisis; the Commission vice-president Manuel Marín, who was planning to step down; Anita Gradin, commissioner for financial control; Padraig Flynn, commissioner for employment and social affairs; and Martin Bangemann, the commissioner for industrial

affairs. Mr van den Broek and Christos Papoutis, the energy commissioner, are expected to bow out at the end of the year. If no substantial figure is chosen, either Sir Leon or Mr van den Broek could be appointed as a stop-gap.

Mr Santer may have sealed his fate and ensured his early

departure with a dramatic reaction to the conclusions of the report of a committee of independent experts.

The President of the Commission described himself as "whiter than white". His team of 20 commissioners could not accept the conclusion that it "has to bear responsibility for fraud, irregularities and mis-

management". Ms Cresson poured petrol on the flames by telling reporters she had been "careless", which produced an outcry among MEPs. Alan Donnelly, leader of Labour's 60 MEPs, said Mr Santer was "in denial". The President of the European Parliament, Jose Maria Gil-Robles, also backed the report unambiguously.

Its conclusions argued that political responsibility "cannot be a vague idea, a concept which in practice proves unrealistic". It added: "The studies carried out by the committee have too often revealed a growing reluctance among the members of the hierarchy to acknowledge their responsibility. It is becoming difficult to find anyone who has

even the slightest sense of responsibility". Although there was no evidence of a case "where a commissioner was directly and personally involved in fraudulent activities", there were instances where "commissioners or the Commission as a whole bears responsibility for instances of fraud, irregularities or mismanagement".

Euro-sceptics ready to capitalise on the confusion

BRITISH MINISTERS fear that the crisis in Brussels will play into the hands of the Euro-sceptics and make it harder for Tony Blair to win public support for joining the single currency.

Yesterday Mr Blair sought to turn the débâcle to his advantage by unveiling plans for wide-ranging reform of the European Commission.

Allies insisted that he now had a golden opportunity to persuade other EU countries to

By ANDREW GRICE
Political Editor

force "complacent" member states, led by France, to accept radical reforms.

Privately, however, pro-EU ministers were gloomy. "It is a significant setback," said one. "We thought we had killed off the main bogeyman when Oskar Lafontaine [the German Finance Minister] resigned. Now the sceptics have found another one in the Commis-

sion." Some ministers even predicted that Mr Blair would be forced to delay the referendum he had planned to call after the next general election.

In an emergency Commons statement, Mr Blair agreed that "Europhobes" could exploit the crisis, but insisted that it was an "opportunity to push through root-and-branch reform of the Commission".

Last night he submitted a paper on Britain's plans to shake up the Commission to

Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, when they held talks in Downing Street. The sweeping changes proposed include:

■ A new contract between the Brussels Commission and the European Council - the heads of government of the 15 EU member states.

■ Setting up an independent investigation office to probe fraud and financial irregularities.

■ An overhaul of the commission's auditing procedures,

financial management, spending plans and awarding of contracts.

■ Commission officials to be fully accountable for their budgets and programmes.

■ A new disciplinary procedure for staff who fall short of expectations.

Mr Blair also endorsed the reforms proposed by the Brussels inquiry report, which he said had "revealed a sad catalogue of negligence and mismanagement". But he reacted

coolly to demands for the European Parliament to be given greater powers to hold the Brussels bureaucracy to account.

He called for Jacques Santer, the Commission President, to leave "as soon as reasonably and practically possible".

Cabinet sources said the new president would have to be fully committed to reform. "We need a new broom for the project to have credibility," said an insider.

Mr Blair said that Mr Santer

was by no means solely responsible for the problems, and he pointed the finger of blame at John Major, the former prime minister, who played a crucial role in securing Mr Santer's appointment by vetoing moves to install Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Belgian Prime Minister.

Mr Blair called for an end to the "horse-trading" which resulted in the outsider Mr Santer getting the job five years ago. "The top jobs should go to

the top people. Merit and merit alone should decide," he said.

The Tories were buoyed by the controversy, which could boost their prospects in the elections for the European Parliament in June.

The Opposition criticised Mr Blair for failing to learn a key lesson from the Brussels inquiry. "The EU tries to do too much and interferences too often. It should be doing less, and doing it better," said William Hague, the Tory leader.

BRITAIN TODAY

Noon today
10 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

KEY
14 Temperature, °C
30 Wind speed, mph and direction

FORECAST
General situation: England and Wales will have a dry and very mild day with any early banks of fog and low cloud lifting to leave sunny spells in most places. The best of the sunshine is likely to be in central and southern areas with some duller interludes over coasts and hills in the north and west. Scotland and Northern Ireland will also be very mild with sunny intervals developing in sheltered eastern areas, but western regions will have a lot of cloud and some local drizzle.

SEA FOG
London, SE England, E Anglia, E Midlands, E England: Very mild with early cloud breaking to leave decent sunny spells. A light and variable breeze. Max temp 13-16C (55-61F).

Cause 1, SW England, W Midlands: Early fog lifting to leave warm sunshine. A light and variable breeze. Max temp 13-16C (55-61F).

Cause 2, SW England, W Midlands: Mild with periods of sunshine elsewhere. A light west to south-westerly wind. Max temp 13-15C (55-59F).

NE & SE Scotland, Edinburgh: Absent some cloud over the hills, but mild and dry with good sunny periods elsewhere. A moderate south-westerly wind. Max temp 11-14C (52-57F).

NW & SW Scotland, Glasgow, N & W Wales: Rather cloudy with some drizzle on coasts and hills, but mild with a few sunny breaks possible. A moderate to fresh south-westerly wind. Max temp 10-12C (50-54F).

N Ireland: Cloudy on western coasts and hills but dry and mild with good sunny spells elsewhere. A moderate south-westerly wind. Max temp 11-14C (52-57F).

OUTLOOK
It will turn noticeably colder with sunny spells and showers in most places. The showers will be heaviest and most frequent in the north with sleet and snow mixed in. Drifting snow is likely over the Scottish hills.

TRAVEL
London: A12 Green Man Roundabout, Leytonstone. Major roadworks on new M11 link road. Until 21st December.

Bristol: M5 J18-19. Major Roadworks on Avonmouth Bridge. Until 22nd June 2001.

Warwickshire: M42 Between J10 Tamworth services and J10 Sutton Coldfield. Roadworks and contraflow. Until 23rd April.

South Yorkshire: M1 Between J34 Threlkirk Viaduct (A6108) & J34 Threlkirk Viaduct (A6178). Sheffield. Carriageway is reduced to two lanes southbound. Until 21st November 2000.

Gloucestershire: A40 Lansdown Rd.

YESTERDAY

EXTREMES
Warmest: Walton on Thames 15C (59F)
Coldest (day): Salloway 8C (46F)
Wettest: Aulbea 0.79 mm
Sunniest: Lowest 10.8 hrs
For 24hrs to 2pm Tuesday

HIGH TIDES
AM HT PM HT
Auramouth 6.53 13.5 7.15 13.5
Cork 5.11 4.4 5.28 4.4
Doverport 5.24 5.4 5.48 5.4
Dover 10.37 6.5 11.00 6.8
Dun Laoghaire 11.04 6.1 11.34 6.0
Falmouth 4.55 5.2 5.19 5.2
Greenwich 12.03 3.1 12.29 3.4
Haverhill 11.44 4.0 - -
Hollyhead 10.00 5.7 10.24 5.6
Hull (Albert Dock) 6.02 8.5 6.10 8.8
Kings Lynn 6.03 6.7 6.09 7.3
Lahli 2.14 5.4 2.28 5.6
Liverpool 10.56 9.6 11.18 9.5
Milford Haven 5.52 7.0 6.14 7.0
Newquay 4.44 7.0 5.05 7.0
Plymouth 6.42 2.0 7.17 2.0
Portsmouth 10.56 4.6 11.24 4.7
Preston 7.68 4.0 8.07 5.0
Scarborough 3.45 5.5 3.53 5.7
Wich 10.57 3.6 11.32 3.5
Height measured in metres

AIR QUALITY
Today's readings
London No. Moderate Good
S. England No. Moderate Good
Wales No. Moderate Good
C. England No. Moderate Good
N. England No. Moderate Good
Scotland No. Moderate Good
N. Ireland No. Moderate Good

SUN & MOON
Sun rises: 06.11
Sun sets: 18.08
Moon rises: 06.21
Moon sets: 17.49
New moon: Today

WEATHERLINE
For the latest forecasts dial 0800 5009 followed by the two digits for your area. Source: The Met. Office. Calls charged at 50p per min (inc VAT).

RAIN OR SHINE...
THE RISK OF being hit by lightning in Singapore has become so high that the government is erecting special lightning shelters and fitting school playgrounds with early-warning devices.

Yesterday, one Thai labourer was killed and another injured when lightning struck their construction site. Singapore has one of the world's highest rates of lightning strikes - 20 per sq km each year.

THE ATLANTIC NOON TODAY
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Nations rush to back their own members

THE CITIZENS of Europe woke up to a frightening vacuum at the heart of the Brussels bureaucracy yesterday, but were quickly reassured by a wave of solidarity bursting from every capital of the continent. Solidarity that is, for each nation's representative in Brussels.

Britain proudly led the way once more, with Tony Blair rallying behind his beleaguered commissioners, Messrs Kinnock and Brittan. The others soon followed.

Italy, for instance, expressed itself appalled by the going-on in Brussels, and demanded that the new commissioners be appointed quickly. The two Italian members of the discredited body, Emma Bonino and Mario Monti, were, of course, totally beyond reproach.

"The Government expresses solidarity and appreciation for their deep commitment during these years... and also for the correctness of their work, which was confirmed by the independent committee," Rome swiftly declared.

Finland seemed delighted with the mass resignation, saying it should pave the way for a more efficient successor. But the Finnish Prime Minister, Paavo Lipponen, did not want the clear-out to go too far. It should certainly not involve Erkki Liikanen, who was in charge of budgetary affairs.

"The Finnish government has full confidence in Commissioner Erkki Liikanen," Mr Lipponen said. "He has been fully cleared in the report."

BY IMRE KARACS
in Berlin

So that's all right then. This scandal, after all, had nothing to do with the EU budget.

And so it went on. "There is no doubt that a new Commission must be appointed which has new people in important positions," said Viktor Klima, the Austrian Chancellor.

Mr Klima obviously did not think the agricultural portfolio, which swallows a third of the EU's budget, is very "important", for he quickly added the following caveat: "That doesn't necessarily apply to all, however... and I personally don't doubt the integrity of Commissioner Fischer."

And yes... Franz Fischer, the agriculture commissioner, is Austrian.

Not all countries, it has to be said, proved so patriotic. The French government pointedly refrained from mentioning Edith Cresson's name. And Germany stopped short of putting in a plug on behalf of its two stalwarts. Both, in fact, had been on the way out for sound political reasons, and the Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer's Greens cannot wait to fill one of those pairs of shoes.

The Germans were in any case too busy trying to find successors. Germany is suffering from a surfeit of superannuated politicians eminently qualified for the top job in Brussels. Alas, Helmut Kohl was ruled out by his party within minutes of his hat landing in the ring.

JP 11/10/50

after

night of the long knives

'A completely ignominious way for them to be sacked'

THERE WAS not even a hint of illicit sex but the sensational contents of the 140-page report into corruption and fraud in the European Commission could not have generated a bigger media frenzy if the Clinton investigator Kenneth Starr himself had been leading the inquiry.

Hordes of journalists, television crews and photographers stampeded when the trolley laden with boxes of the first copies was wheeled into the European Parliament at 6.45pm. Like bargain hunters on the first day of Harrods' sale they jostled each other out of the way, ripping copies away from rivals.

Within seconds, they were leaping into taxis or bellowing the juiciest quotes about France's commissioner Edith Cresson and her dentist down mobile phones to every capital in Europe.

A few hundred metres away at the Breydel building, the headquarters of the Commission, fleets of black limousines were massed. Inside, those commissioners who had not been quizzed by the committee of wise men on Sunday were seeing the report for the first time.

Franz Fischler, the Austrian in charge of agriculture, was not mentioned in the document. But as he turned the final page he told an aide to prepare a statement. Whatever the outcome of the Commission's meeting, he would resign. "He just read the conclusions and he knew it was all over," a source said.

MEPs were swift to bray for blood but at that stage on Monday evening the targets were just Ms Cresson and, to a lesser extent, the Commission President, Jacques Santer. Pat Cox, the Parliament's Liberal leader, hinted that if Ms Cresson was not gone before nightfall the game would be up. British Tory MEP Edward McMillan-Scott called a press conference

BY KATHERINE BUTLER
in Brussels

Shocked by Paul van Buitenen, the Commission whistle-blower who was suspended for revealing the corruption. The Tories called for all 20 commissioners to be sacked but few imagined this would happen.

"I have been very lonely," the Dutchman said, "and I still am not certain about what is going to happen to me."

Edith Cresson, the former commissioner for education and training who yesterday defiantly said "Je ne regrette rien", might have been thinking along the same lines as Mr van Buitenen, but she was giving nothing away.

The Commission was scheduled to meet at 9pm but the start time slipped as commissioners and their aides pored over the document. Some had brought in food, expecting a long night.

But as the devastating implications of the conclusions sank in - particularly the charge that the commissioners had lost control and had displayed not the slightest sense of political responsibility for the fraud and mismanagement - there was a final attempt to force Ms Cresson to take the rap.

She had been singled out not only for hiring her dentist in the fictitious capacity of visiting scientist, but also for deliberately misleading both her colleagues and the European Parliament over known fraud in the Leonardo scheme, a \$400m youth training project.

In ones and twos her colleagues beat a path to her door suggesting that she might want to reconsider her position. But a phone call between Mr Santer and Lionel Jospin, the French Prime Minister, established what many had feared. The French were not going to allow a former prime minister



Journalists watching Edith Cresson speaking at European Commission headquarters in Brussels before Jacques Santer announced the body's resignation

AFP

to become the sacrificial lamb. In any case, commissioners and their private advisers were soon to witness their own demise on the closed circuit television link. It was an ignominious way to be sacked.

In the office of the British commissioner, Neil Kinnock, there was consternation when only the Spanish interpretation channel could be found. Pauline Green, leader of the 200 Socialists - who helped save the Commission a mass sacking in January - was about to make her public statement.

That was the turning point. She was now looking for the heads of all 20 commissioners. "We are calling on the European Commission to accept responsibility for the conclusions of the

report and resign," she said. The speculation in Brussels was that Mr Jospin's decision to stand by Ms Cresson led in turn to pressure from Paris on the French Socialist MEPs. The Socialist move ensured that if the commissioners did not go, they would be pushed.

Both Mr Kinnock and the Irish Padraig Flynn said that although the report was unbalanced there was no response to the verdict but a collective resignation. Ms Cresson said little but maintained a demeanour one source summed up merely as "Cressonnesque".

After agreeing to resign as with the same brush as Ms Cresson, Yves-Thibault de Silguy, France's commissioner for monetary policy, said he thought everyone should have resigned in January when the censure motion was first voted.

A body the Commission adjourned, leaving Mr Santer to compose himself and draft a statement for the press. Mr Fischler beat him to it with a statement announcing his own resignation. The game was up.

At about 10 minutes to 1.00am, a grim-faced Mr Santer took the lift down to the basement where the airless overheated press centre was heaving with excitement. It took only a few seconds. There were no questions allowed and Mr Santer returned to his office.

The sun was shining yesterday morning as the disgraced commission team reconvened at the Breydel. Early interviews on French radio had caught Ms Cresson off guard. For the first time she admitted she may have been "a little careless", although she still had "no regrets".

The crisis was the kind of crisis you only get in Brussels. Mr Santer appeared before the press again this time to say he was "whiter than white" and would be going down fighting. "It is a disaster," he said in a radio interview, as the new, uncertain dawn broke.

Mr Fischler went to address a routine agricultural committee meeting. Mr Kinnock met a delegation from the European electronics and aviation industry, and the Finnish commissioner, Erkki Liikanen, bravely honoured a breakfast appointment with journalists.

It was left to the British trade commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, to sum up events of the previous night most succinctly. "It is a disaster," he said in a radio interview, as the new, uncertain dawn broke.

Shadowy world of the 'state within a state'

WHAT TOPPLED the Commission was not damning revelations of corruption but the shadowy world of former intelligence and army officers running Jacques Santer's "state within a state".

The report painted a sinister picture of the security services that the President controlled, staffed by a former French intelligence official, Claude Willeme, and a one-time Belgian police colonel.

Although they reported directly to the office of Mr Santer, the palace guards became a law unto themselves, apparently beyond the control of the Commission's most senior staff.

The report complains that "no supervision was exercised and a 'state within a state' was allowed to develop". The security staff even put the Commission's own internal fraud-busting team under sur-

BY STEPHEN CASTLE
in Brussels

veillance. The inquiry concluded that they were a clique, "a private club for former police officers from Brussels or the vicinity, for whom special recruitment 'competitions' were arranged".

The scandal which led to the investigation revolved around the awarding of a contract for security work to the British security agency Group 4.

The report starts in 1992, highlighting the behaviour of 10 security guards who accompanied the then commissioner Jacques Delors to the Seville World Exhibition. "Their behaviour (feet on the table, heavy drinking etc) was considered intolerable," it said. However, when complaints were made, the director of the service simply "covered for his



Delors: 1992 controversy

staff". The document sheds light on how key posts in the security service were allotted. "On the recommendation from the director of security in Belgium, the director of the security office recruited into the Commission Security Office an ex-colonel from the Belgian police (in December 1997)".

The ex-colonel then had to be moved from his post, five days after a heightened state of alert during the Gulf war when "no particular measures had been taken".

The report puts part of the blame for the state of the security service on Mr Santer and a lack of "meaningful interest".

The text directly indicts Edith Cresson for favouritism. The charge centres on her decision to employ Rene Berthelot, a dentist from her home town of Chateaufort as a scientific visitor. It notes Mr Berthelot's frequent "missions" to Chateaufort and says: "It is hard to understand why Chateaufort should be almost the sole centre of interest of a visiting scientist whose remit covered very wide fields."

The report is on the website: <http://www.europarl.eu.int/ex-peris>

Worst moment for fiasco

IF EUROPE'S most deadly enemy had been allowed to choose the moment of the European Union's biggest institutional crisis in 42 years, he could have done no better than this one.

Monday night's resignation en masse of the European Commission has decapitated the EU's central institution in the run-up to long-overdue decisions on regional and agricultural policies, and financial and institutional reform - all of them preconditions to the planned enlargement to the east.

It comes, moreover, midway through a German presidency that is still reeling from the departure of the country's finance minister, and which has not covered itself with glory in the

BY RUPERT CORNWELL

management of EU affairs thus far. "Europe is not without leadership," Chancellor Gerhard Schröder asserted yesterday. Others might beg to differ.

Leaders of the 15 EU member countries cannot win. The choice lies between allowing a caretaker Commission short of credibility to stay in office or devoting precious time and energy to the task of nominating a new one. A further complication will be the June elections for the European Parliament. Assuming that the new assembly insists on its right to approve a new executive, nothing may be settled for three months at least.

But business will not wait. The United States will not de-

clare a moratorium in its double-barrelled trade assault on the EU, against the banana import regime and the common agricultural policy. The financial markets will not give the euro, which has dropped 8 per cent since its January launch, the benefit of the doubt until the Commission's house is in order.

Most important of all is Agenda 2000, reordering the farm and regional spending that accounts for the overwhelming bulk of the EU's annual budget and streamlining institutions which barely function now and would collapse entirely under the weight of a union of 20, 21, or even 26.

EU leaders were due to cut the Gordian knot at their summit in Berlin next week. Dis-

tracted by the implosion in Brussels, they will now find the task even more difficult, and the whole business may slip into the second half of 1999, by which time the Euro-novice Finland will have assumed the presidency. All members accept that without a deal on Agenda 2000, enlargement will be impossible.

Small wonder that Sir Leon Brittan, the outgoing vice-president of the Commission and Britain's senior representative in Brussels, yesterday described events as "a disaster", which had to be handled with "ruthless determination".

But ruthless determination has not been a hallmark lately of either the member states nor the Commission which runs Europe in their name.

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'Chronic failure' at heart hospital

A PICTURE of a chronically malfunctioning hospital was painted yesterday at the opening of the public inquiry into the deaths of babies who underwent heart surgery at Bristol Royal Infirmary.

Tracey Clarke described failures at every level in the care of her daughter Melissa, who died 10 days after undergoing heart surgery in October 1991. The mistakes, omissions and lack of care described by Mrs Clarke, 36, from Devon, went far beyond the behaviour of the

By JEREMY LAURANCE
Health Editor

surgeons who were found guilty of serious professional misconduct by the General Medical Council (GMC) last year. She spoke of communication failures, faults in equipment, lack of support and a reluctance to confront problems which resulted in Melissa being kept on a ventilator for days after she was brain dead.

Mrs Clarke, who with her husband Graham is planning

legal action against the infirmary, was the first of at least 500 witnesses due to give evidence to the inquiry, chaired by Ian Kennedy, professor of health law and ethics at University College, London.

Melissa was born with the main arteries to her heart transposed, causing her frequently to turn blue because too little oxygen was getting into her blood. She was operated on by Janardan Dhasmana, one of the three doctors found guilty by the GMC last year. Hospital

records show that the operation went well. Mrs Clarke, who saw her daughter immediately after the surgery, said: "She looked lovely. She was pink and all the blue tinge had gone. I thought everything was fine."

It emerged yesterday, however, that 48 hours after the operation a problem occurred with the ventilator helping Melissa to breathe. A post-mortem examination report, which Mrs Clarke did not see until several years later, said Melissa had suffered respira-

tory failure "partially due to a mechanical failure in the ventilator". The report said it was "several hours" before "satisfactory oxygenation" was achieved. A second record referred to "split tubes" on the ventilator.

Mrs Clarke told the inquiry: "On the Thursday [nine days after the operation] I was not happy with what I was being told. I rang twice, the second time at 10.30pm, and I spoke to a doctor who said everything was going as planned. Those

words are ingrained on my mind." Next morning she and her husband were called to the hospital. "We walked into the intensive care unit and all the nurses turned their backs on us."

After a three-hour wait, the couple saw Dr Stephen Bolsin, the consultant anaesthetist credited with blowing the whistle on the surgery failures. He admitted there was no hope for Melissa and that she was brain-stem dead.

The next day, the hospital told Mrs Clarke her daughter

was still alive. She suggested it was time to switch off the ventilator. Half an hour later a nurse phoned to say Melissa had died in her arms.

The infirmary omitted to inform the Clarks' local hospital in Exeter that Melissa had died and six months later the couple received a letter about a missed appointment. Last month, eight years after their daughter's death, they learned the infirmary had kept her heart for two months after the post-mortem examination.

Black youth in coma after racist beating

A BLACK teenager was seriously ill in hospital last night after being beaten into a coma by a gang of white youths in a racially motivated attack.

David Virgo, 19, was punched to the ground and then kicked unconscious after leaving a pub disco in the West Midlands with two friends on Saturday night. He recovered consciousness yesterday.

Witnesses told police the trainee landscape gardener's head was "kicked like a football". His mother June was at his bedside last night at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley, where his condition was described as serious but stable.

The attack is believed to be the most serious racial incident in Britain since the publication last month of Sir William Macpherson's report into the death of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence.

Detective Inspector John Larkin, of West Midlands Police, said: "We know David was viciously assaulted. He was punched to the floor and repeatedly kicked. One witness said his head was kicked like a football."

"It was a racially motivated attack, mercilessly and brutally inflicted. This was an horrific and brutal assault on a lad who had gone out to enjoy himself for an evening with friends."

By IAN BURRELL
Home Affairs Correspondent

Mr Virgo's father, Eluid, said last night: "When I was told what had happened to my son I could not believe it. Nobody deserves to be treated like that. The people who did this are wicked men."

The victim's sister, Marie, aged 29, said: "I was really shocked when I saw him. His face was badly beaten and the major injuries are to his head. He is a fun-loving quiet lad who likes to go out with his mates. He never goes out looking for trouble."

Chris Myant, of the Commission for Racial Equality, said the attack was a signal that society as a whole, not just the police, had to make more strenuous efforts to tackle racism.

He said: "This shows that unfortunately there are young people in Britain who don't appear to have shared the general public response to the death of Stephen Lawrence."

Police believe there were three members of the white gang and are appealing for witnesses to the attack, which happened at about 11.30pm outside a fish and chip shop in Blackheath High Street. Earlier in the evening Mr Virgo and his friends had visited a disco at the nearby George and Dragon pub.



An image of actor Terence Stamp will be on show in 'The Eye That Never Sleeps' the first retrospective of work by British photographer Terence Donovan opening today at the Museum of London until 1 August

'Sun' sets on career of spin doctor

By RHYN WILLIAMS

THE JOURNALISTIC career of Peter Mandelson's former aide, Benjamin Wegg-Prosser, ended before it began yesterday when it emerged that he will no longer be joining *The Sun*.

Mr Wegg-Prosser had been expected to start work as an assistant to the paper's editor, David Yelland, next Tuesday. However, following the hardening of *The Sun's* opposition to the euro, the two sides have agreed to part company even though, strictly speaking, they did not come together in the first place. Sources indicated that the split was also precipitated by fears among *The Sun's* political staff that employing Mr Wegg-Prosser would lead to accusations that it was climbing into bed with New Labour.

"The Sun has decided it is no longer appropriate to employ me following its decision to take a more emphatic line on the euro," Mr Wegg-Prosser said yesterday. "It has acted honourably throughout."

The Sun announced it was hiring the former Labour aide in the wake of Mr Mandelson's resignation as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in January. Mr Wegg-Prosser was expected to earn £43,000 for acting as a political adviser to Mr Yelland. It is understood the paper's political staff were decidedly cool about the idea.

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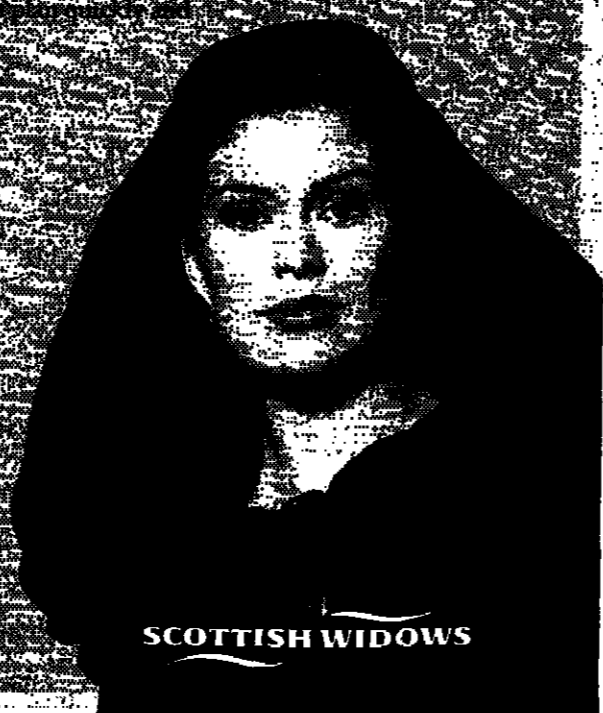
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Nelson assassination: Kent chief constable will head murder inquiry in effort to quell rumours over links to bombing

Police to investigate RUC 'collusion'

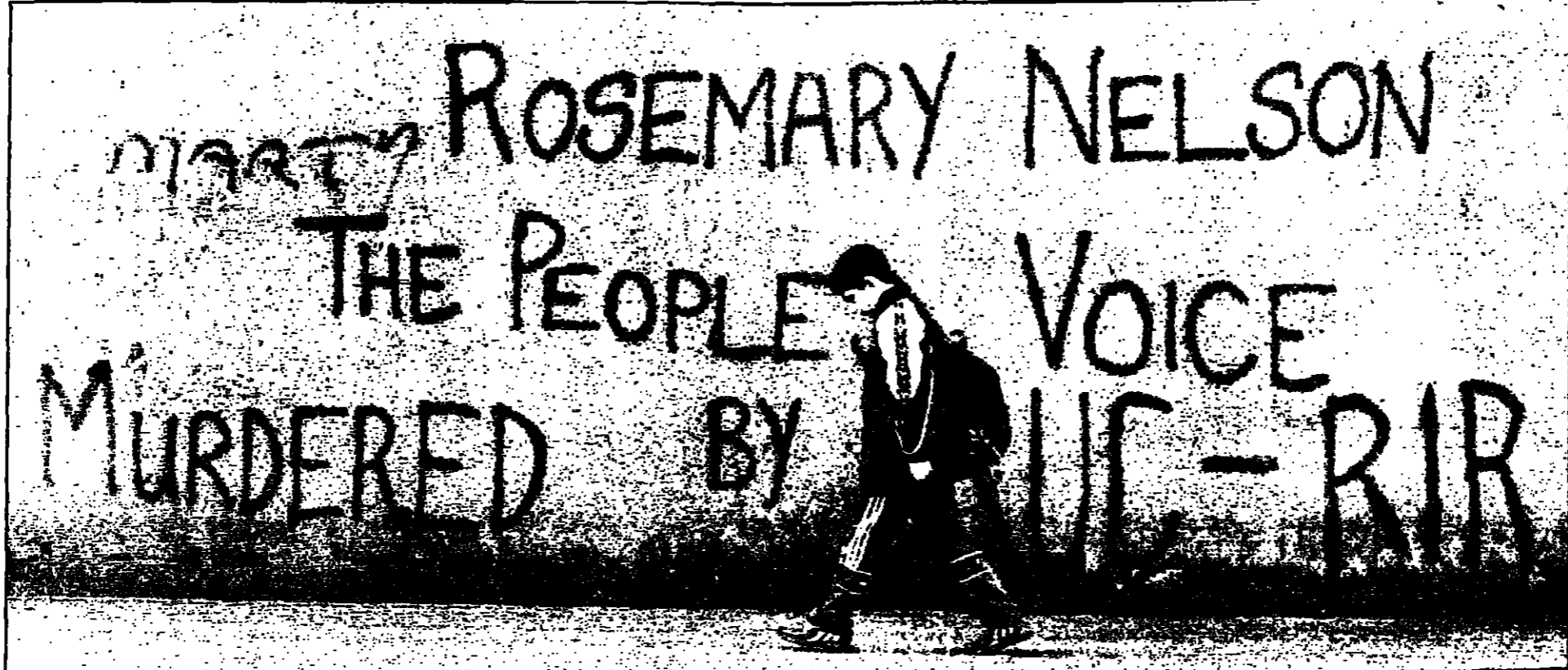
By DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

THE ROSEMARY Nelson killing and the unanswered questions surrounding it yesterday resulted in the Royal Ulster Constabulary calling in officers from England and from the FBI to assist in its investigation.

The move followed a wave of criticism and allegations against the RUC from nationalist and human rights sources. With accusations of collusion thick in the air, the force clearly believed it had to move swiftly to counter criticisms that it would be investigating itself.

The Chief Constable, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, announced he had asked the Chief Constable of Kent, David Phillips, to head the investigation, and that the FBI would also be involved. He added: "I think it is important, when there are grave concerns about Mrs Nelson on the international front, that their involvement will also give this investigation an international dimension as well as added independence. I recognise this is an unprecedented case in the nature of the sort of allegations that have been made."

In Washington, the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, described Mrs Nelson, who was fatally injured by an undercar boobytrap bomb on Monday, as "a brave woman



Graffiti that appeared after the murder of Rosemary Nelson. The solicitor claimed she had been the victim of 'numerous death threats' from police officers Alan Lewis

who stood up for what she believed in and carried those beliefs into her work."

Although the murder was claimed by the Red Hand Defenders, a small grouping responsible for two other killings in the past six months, the pos-

sibility that it had help from a larger loyalist organisation is being investigated. Undercar boobytraps were a regular feature of the IRA's campaign of violence until the early Nineties, but they have remained outside the capabilities of almost all loy-

alist organisations. The exception to this has been the Ulster Defence Association, which has mounted four such attacks in just over two years, one of which resulted in a death. The possibility of a large-scale return to UDA violence is

of major concern to the authorities. All elements of the political spectrum are wondering how the killing will affect the peace process and the chances of finding agreement on a new, developed government.

In Lurgan, Co Armagh,

parish priest Father Kieran McParlan said Mrs Hamilton's husband and three children were shocked and distressed by the killing. "They are numb, feeling very helpless and in need of support and care."

In the city of Londonderry,

solicitors staged a march to an RUC station. One of them, Paddy McDermott, said they wished to express disquiet at the murder and solidarity with the Nelson family. "We wish to make it clear that we want to see a full and proper indepen-

dent investigation into Rosemary's death and into the threats which were made against her life."

Paran Kumaraswamy, the United Nations special investigator to whom Mrs Nelson had complained of police intimidation, said he had feared for her life. Describing her as a very courageous human rights lawyer, he added: "Though I feared that Rosemary's life was at stake, I really didn't expect this to happen to her and this is really a shock."

Mrs Nelson had been due to meet a police watchdog body on 30 March to hear the results of an investigation into her complaints that she had been the subject of death threats and assaults from officers of the RUC. She had arranged to meet the Independent Police Complaints Commission to discuss the findings of an inquiry set up after a UN human rights report last year, which quoted complaints from Mrs Nelson that she had been the victim of "numerous death threats".

It was the latest in a long line of reports into human rights issues in Northern Ireland which describe a pattern in which RUC detectives questioning paramilitary suspects are said to threaten both the suspects and their lawyers.

Leading article, Review, page 3

Mowlam plea for gesture to end stalemate

MO MOWLAM led a minute's silence in Washington yesterday for the murdered solicitor Rosemary Nelson. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was in the United States for meetings and St Patrick's Day celebrations.

Mrs Nelson had been identified by human rights groups as being at only "low-grade" risk in Northern Ireland, said Ms Mowlam. She had not wanted protection from the RUC.

Ms Mowlam said that she believed a way out of the current impasse over the new Assembly was possible, and that Northern Ireland was "a hair's breadth away" from a deal that would unlock progress on the new executive.

British officials said that hopes were rising that a deal would be made following talks today in Washington between the leaders of the Northern Ireland political parties and President Bill Clinton.

Ms Mowlam, Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister, David Trimble, the First Minister, and Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Féin, will all be in Washington for the talks.

"We are very far along this road. It would be a tragedy if we didn't keep on walking down it," said Ms Mowlam. "A gesture... a beginning" was needed to end the stalemate between the nationalists and loyalists over whether Sinn Féin could take its place in the executive before decommissioning began. "Everybody is going to have to move, everybody is going to have to do something," she said.

By ANDREW MARSHALL
in Washington

David Trimble said that he hoped President Clinton would ask Gerry Adams to begin decommissioning. "The important thing that can be done by people here in Washington is to use what influence they have with those elements in Northern Ireland who have yet to begin their end of implementing the agreement," he said.

Sinn Féin are playing a "long game" he added, saying that he feared that progress on decommissioning might be stretched out for weeks if not months. He also said he was concerned that the issue of decommissioning might become entangled with the forthcoming report from Chris Patten, the former governor of Hong Kong on policing in Northern Ireland.

US officials say that Mr Clinton will reiterate that all parties must respect the spirit as well as the letter of the Good Friday Agreement, and that some movement from Sinn Féin is necessary.

Searius Mallon of the SDLP has outlined a formula that would see further British military withdrawals and demilitarisation, efforts to build confidence by identifying the burial sites of some of Northern Ireland's many "disappeared", and a clear commitment to begin disarmament.

But the key would be a change of tack from Sinn Féin. "I think there's room in there for Sinn Féin to move," he said.

IN BRIEF

Doctor 'ordered mercy killing'

A nurse told a General Medical Council disciplinary hearing yesterday that she had refused to take part in a mercy killing. June Bleasdale was deputising as a matron at a nursing home in Preston in 1986 when she claims Dr Ken Taylor told her to withhold food supplements from Mrs X, 85, who died 58 days later. The case was adjourned until tomorrow.

President of NUS re-elected

A LEFT-WING challenge for control of the 3 million-strong National Union of Students was defeated yesterday as Andrew Pakes, the Labour candidate, was re-elected for a second term as president. Mr Pakes took more than 55 per cent of the vote at the NUS conference in Blackpool.

Villagers protect ringing of bells

PURCHASERS OF new homes being built just a few yards from All Saints Church, Thurlestone, Devon, are being asked to sign an undertaking never to object to the sound of its bells, regarded as a cherished part of village life.

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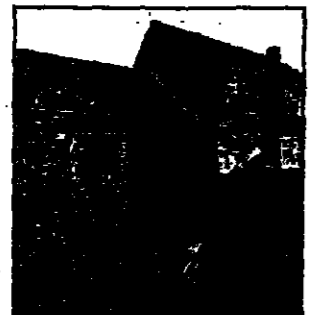
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JP 11/15/99

Police stations ignored by public

THE DAYS of traditional police stations, with their reassuring blue lamps and 24-hour service, are numbered. A new study has found that many stations are so dilapidated and inconveniently located that they are next to useless.



PC Austin, who worked at Birtley

public telephoned or visited the station, as PC Trevor Austen, who was stationed there, confirmed. The people of Birtley (population 15,000) did not even notice when it was closed down by the police.

BY JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

phoning our central control room if they had a problem. We closed it down and didn't tell the public to see what response we would get; no one noticed."

The building is for sale and has been replaced by a mobile station in a caravan, which has resulted in a drop in crime.

The Audit Commission report, "Action Stations - Improving the Management of the Police Estate", found that policing priorities and the public's needs were rapidly changing. A survey in Northamptonshire discovered that people were more likely to go to a police station to report lost or stray dogs than to give details of a crime. The most popular reason for a visit to one of the 2,000 stations in England and Wales is to inquire about lost or found property, which accounts for one in five trips.

Only three in every 100 people go to a station to report a crime. The report claims that communities often fear that their area will be less safe without a local police station. "In fact, closing some stations or contracting opening times can release officers for more patrol," says the study by the public spending watchdog.

Only a quarter of police stations are open 24 hours a day and most public contact takes place by telephone. Some forces, such as Greater Manchester, Sussex, and Lothian and Borders, have installed interactive computers on streets which have direct video links to police control rooms.



Apparently overwhelmed by one of three 'Shopping Experiences' at the new Bluewater complex, two shoppers take a break

David Ross

Bluewater: a shopping centre that has everything - except a sense of restraint

BY ANN TRENEAMAN

BLUEWATER IS the largest shopping mall in Europe and, as revealed at yesterday's opening, it is also probably the strangest. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Most shopping malls are ghastly. Bluewater is not ghastly: it has seven lakes, a forest and 10,000 daffodils to blunt the truth of what goes on here. And that is shopping so excessive - there are 320 retail outlets - that it might be an Olympic sport before long.

Bluewater's spokeswoman does not agree. "It's not really a shopping mall at all. It's more of a Destination Day Out." She said I couldn't miss it. She was right.

Bluewater looks like a futuristic mini-city. The building has pointy bits on the roof which the architect, Eric Kuhne, says are supposed to resonate with the shape of the Kentish oast house. It reminded me of Madonna's old Gaultier bustier but that could just be because he's from Texas and I'm from Kent.

It is easy to find and, with 13,000 parking spaces in specially designed people-friendly car parks (evidently a new concept), it is easy to park. Inside, you find yourself in a "welcome area". I later learn this is designed to prepare me to spend, spend, spend.

"Here's a place to park your husband, park your coat, get a cappuccino and then get ready to punch a hole through your credit card!" exclaimed Stuart Hornery, chairman of Lend Lease, the Australian company behind Bluewater.

I did none of those things but did manage to get lost. Bluewater comprises three malls designed for three shopping experiences (I'm sorry to use such language but everyone does after breathing mall air for a few hours). The Guildhall is family focus, the Thames Walk is the High Street. They are arranged in a triangle with each corner anchored by a store: John Lewis, Marks & Spencer and House of Fraser.

There I was, lost and not even knowing what shopping experience I was supposed to be having when I met a man.

"Hello there!" he said. "Who are you?" I demanded. "Why, I'm just someone saying hello," he said.

"Are you sure?" I asked. "Yes," he said.

I was still suspicious. "So, why are you here?"

He then revealed he was responsible for the toilets. He said they were the best toilets in any shopping mall ever.

Quality, quality, quality.

The next man I met was the architect. Mr Kuhne is very large and tall, which is exactly how a Texan should be, and told me that Bluewater had

begun as a poem. He composed the sonnet in July 1996 as a way of distilling the project's ethos. His sonnet begins, "White chalk cliffs and waters blue/surround the crystal city new" and ends with, "Build this dream with forthright hands and hearts that beat with industry". But he said that Bluewater was really best summed up by Keats. He said:

"To one who has been long in city pent,

'Tis very sweet to look into the fair

And open face of heaven - to breathe a prayer

Full in the smile of the blue firmament."

I said that I wasn't sure that took in the £350m investment here. He quit quoting long enough to say that actually, with the shops in, the place was now worth £1.12bn. Keats' words could be found engraved around the corner.

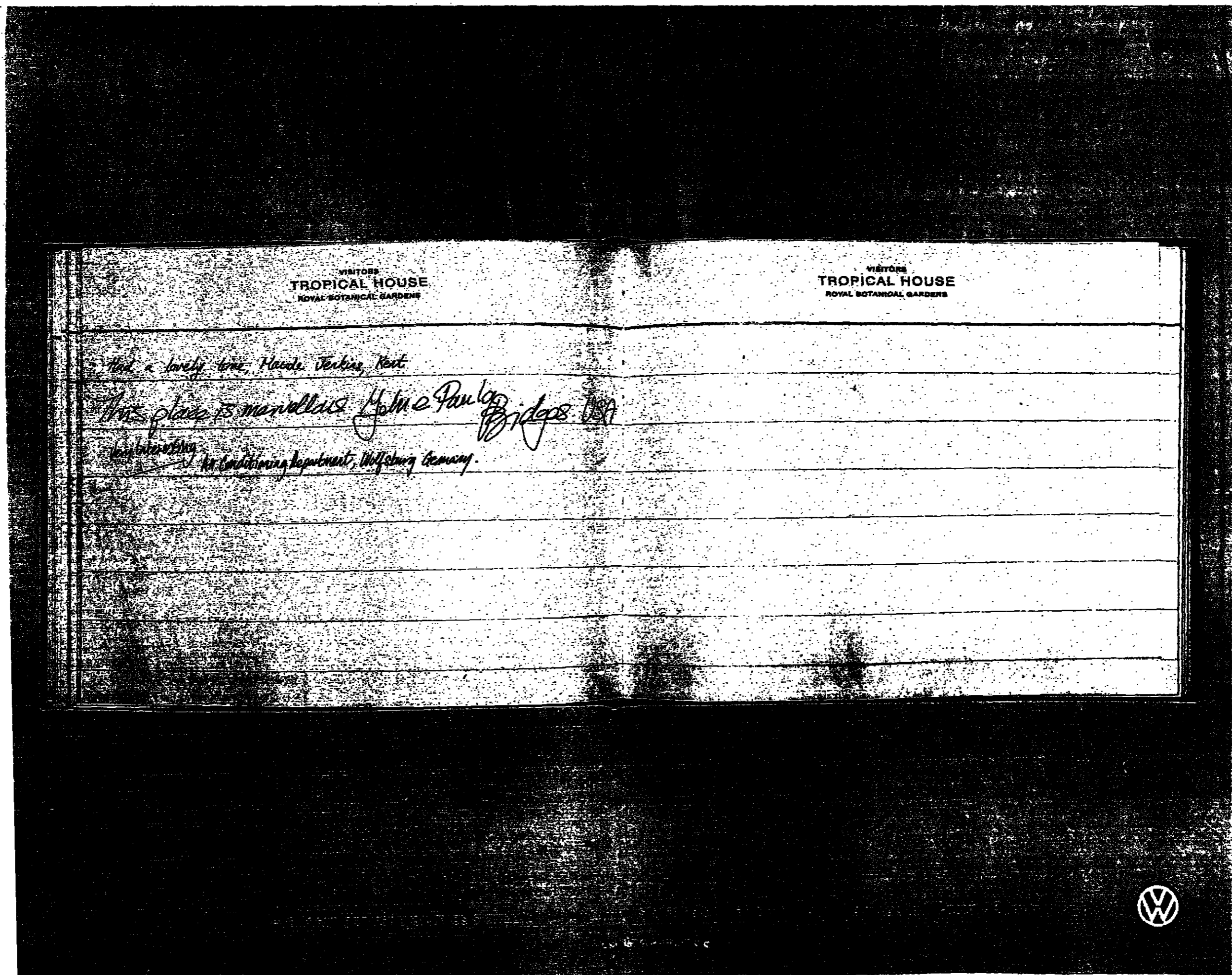
Bluewater is dotted with little seating areas. Most of the people seated in them are men. I introduced myself to Tony Sheppard, who had just bought a video. "Actually I'm really here to buy a wedding ring." He and his fiancée have been engaged for three years. He had already seen a few rings he liked. I mentioned poetry. "Great! I need some of that for the wedding." I didn't have the heart to tell him he is right smack in the middle of a Shopping Experience.

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Eton pupil died in 'fainting game'

AN ETON College pupil died when he hanged himself in a "fainting game" that was played virtually every night between suppertime and prayers at the private school, an inquest heard yesterday.

BY KATHY MARKS

sons. "We got a slight buzz from it when we came round."

A post-mortem examination concluded that Nicholas died of asphyxia in his room at the school, where pupils include Princes William and Harry.

His parents, Malcolm and Liz Taylor, attended the inquest at the Guildhall, Windsor, but were too upset to speak.

Mr Wilson said he had struggled to understand what had gone through Nicholas's mind. "I have been in this court for 28 years and I thought I had heard

"This fainting game was taking place between boys who are some of the cream of our society, who are probably also of

above average intelligence. Why? What words spring to mind - crazy, mad, stupid?"

that Nicholas had tried to "faint" himself, but had no intention of taking his own life.

He added: "I find it difficult to criticise Eton College. Yes, they had an absolute duty of care, but there is only so much you can do."

"I shall go away; the boys will go back to college and the college will return to its normal self. The incident will be put behind everyone, save Mr and Mrs Taylor, who have lost a son in tragic circumstances."

One of Nicholas's friends said: "There were about six or seven faintings each evening."

Other pupils said that Nicholas seemed to take particular pleasure in the game when he was under pressure.

The housemaster of Baldwins Bec, Robert Topham, said the game had been kept a secret from school authorities: "It is almost a general rule that a

clever boy who does not want to get caught may well not get caught doing something that may be inappropriate or wrong," he said.

Another of Nicholas's friends said Nicholas had tried to perform it on himself on a previous occasion: "Nick was standing by the door with my dressing gown cord," he said. "He said: 'If no one is going to do it to me, then I'll do it to myself.' He put the dressing gown cord around his neck."

Another boy said that the person being "fainted" would tap on someone's thigh as the cord was pulled. When he stopped tapping, that was the signal for them to stop.

Describing versions of the game, he said: "If you hug someone really hard and then they stand up, all the blood rushes to their head and they can faint that way."



Chris Burden testing one of the planes from his piece "when robots rule the world; the two minute airplane factory" which is to open in the Tate tomorrow
Andrew Ross

Tate turns profit-making into art-form

ART AND science have finally come together, with mammon right in the middle.

BY DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

The Tate Gallery is about to make one of its most radical breaks yet with the concept of what is art. The Tate's Duveen galleries, which used to hold Rodin's sculpture *The Kiss*, will from tomorrow house an assembly line making model aeroplanes.

The assembly line will manufacture rubber-band powered model aeroplanes from tissue paper, plastic and balsa wood parts. The planes will come off the production line at the rate of one every two minutes, fly up, circle and descend, to land on the gallery floor. Twenty-five thousand will be produced over the four-month run of the exhibition.

Each will be on sale to the public at £5. And visitors will be free to fly them from the steps of the gallery.

The exhibition "When Robots Rule: The Two-Minute Airplane Factory" is the work of the 52-year-old American artist Chris Burden, whose aim is to demystify science.

But is it art? Most certainly, says the Tate curator Frances Morris. "At the end of the century you are free to examine the great questions without pre-

essional restraints. You can be a free spirit. And there is a dark side being explored. Aero-planes are liberating. But they are also instruments of mass destruction. It won't take you long before a work like this begins to echo the Bittz: dozens of planes cascading from the front steps of the Tate on to the Jackson Pollock ticket-buys."

Chris Burden says: "I want people to understand these processes. Do you know how your telephone or television works? What I really want is for this exhibition to be a real model of industrial capitalism. We have built a machine. It makes a product. We are selling the product for 55. These

ing the product for £5. Then comes a magic moment when every plane you sell makes a profit. And that's art too. It's beautiful." He added: "Artists

beautiful." He added: "Artists and scientists used to be the same people; you looked through your telescope at night and painted in the morning. An astronaut in America said recently that Nasa had made a

...that Nasa had made a very great error. They should have sent painters and musicians to simply look out of the window and digest what it means to go into outer space."

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Parenting: Research stresses importance of father-son relationships, as number of babies conceived inside marriage falls



Some of the participants in the survey, which found emotional support from father figures is crucial to boys

Boys are suffering from 'Dad Deficit'

BOYS WITH low self-esteem suffer from "Dad Deficit" – a low level of emotional support from their fathers, according to a survey published yesterday.

Lack of paternal involvement is linked to a son's poor opinion of himself, his "anti-school" attitudes and a tendency to get into trouble with the police, the nationwide survey of 1,400 boys between the ages of 13 and 19 indicated.

However, it is unclear which comes first – the low self-esteem or the "Dad Deficit". Independent research suggests that fathers find it easier to be close to sons who they perceive as successful and that their increased interest feeds into the son's confidence.

Researchers measured the level of interaction between

BY CLARE GARNER

fathers and sons by how much time they spend together, how much interest the father pays to the son's schoolwork, and to what extent the father is willing to talk through the son's worries.

At one end of the scale was the "Dad Deficit" (DD) and, at the other extreme, the "Highly Involved Man" (HIM), whose supportive influence proved disproportionately positive.

HIM fathering was as effective regardless of whether the man lived at home or was the biological father.

Adrienne Katz, the author of the study, "Leading Lads", wants to encourage men who come into contact with boys, be they fathers, teachers, youth

workers or sports coaches, to be more aware of their responsibility. "Men don't seem to understand the power of their input," she said yesterday. "Boys are much less likely to turn to a friend than girls and so they need emotional support from the family. If a father models behaviour which never talks about feelings, it is hard for a boy to seek help if he's depressed or troubled."

The study showed that HIM fathering protects against depression and even suicide. According to the Samaritans, suicide attempts by young men have increased by 118 per cent in the past 10 years.

In 1996, 547 young men took their lives, compared with 157 young women.

One of the most striking findings of the "Leading Lads" study was the extent to which boys put up barriers to avoid getting help. However, boys with highly involved fathers were less likely than "Dad Deficit" sons to believe that boys are expected to cope with problems on their own.

Cultural beliefs about how a man should act and what boys do or do not do were found to be felt most keenly by those boys with the poorest self-image. They are also most likely to have fathers who tell them, "boys don't cry".

Boys are inclined to protect their parents by keeping the problems to themselves. They know that their fathers want to be proud of them and believe that to tell them they are not coping would be to let them down.

As one interviewee, Danny Evans, 17, from north London, put it: "Boys have a secret second life on the inside and a shell outside... Every father wants to be proud of his son, enforcing definitions of what these children should be – and it's doing harm. Some people are dying inside but too scared to admit it to themselves."

As the "Leading Lads" survey was conducted only over one year it was unable to establish whether there is a causal link between low self-esteem and "Dad Deficit".

Unmarried conceive half of all babies

HALF OF all conceptions now take place outside marriage, compared with just over a third in 1986, according to government statistics published yesterday.

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that out of just under 300,000 women who conceived in England and Wales in 1997, 400,000 were unmarried. In 1986, by comparison, 305,000 conceptions out of a total of 819,000 took place outside marriage.

Under-age pregnancies fell by 5 per cent in 1997 to 8.9 conceptions per thousand girls aged 13-15, compared with 9.4 per thousand in 1986. Overall, teenage conception rates fell by 1 per cent over the same period, according to the spring issue of *Population Trends*, the publication of the ONS.

Despite this fall, the figures show that the United Kingdom has the highest number of births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 out of eight European countries studied by the ONS.

In 1997 there were 30 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in the UK, compared with 21 per 1,000 in Portugal and 17 per 1,000 in the Republic of Ireland.

The report shows a large increase in the number of women over 35 conceiving in the period since 1991.

In 1997 there were 41.2 conceptions per 1,000 women aged

BY LINUS GREGORIADIS

35-39, and 8.7 conceptions per 1,000 among women aged 40 and over – the only two age groups to register an increase in fertility rates since 1996.

Karen Dunnell, co-editor of the report, said she thought the rise in conceptions was the result of improved educational prospects for women.

She said: "The proportion of women who gain educational qualifications is rising, and their economic activity rates are rising relative to young men's – this is probably one of the main reasons."

The report also found that two-thirds of total conceptions outside marriage resulted in motherhood, compared with more than 80 per cent of conceptions within marriage.

The number of people cohabiting in England and Wales will double by 2021, according to the ONS. About 1.56 million unmarried couples were living together in 1996, a figure expected to rise to nearly 3 million within 25 years.

The ONS estimates the most dramatic increase in numbers of cohabiting couples will take place among the over-35s. It is estimated that by 2006 less than half of all adults will be married.

Divorce rates dropped in 1997, with 146,339 decrees absolute in England and Wales, 6.6 per cent fewer than in 1996.

John Peel wins top radio award

ONE OF Radio 4's most controversial new programmes received an award yesterday when John Peel was named radio broadcaster of the year by the Television and Radio Industries Club.

Peel, 60, who received an OBE for services to broadcasting last year, won the award for his Saturday morning programme *Home Truths*. The programme, a light-hearted look at domestic life, was slated by critics of Radio 4's new schedule as a programme "about nothing" when it launched last year.

"I am jolly pleased to have won," Peel said at the award ceremony in London yesterday.

"Initially the programme was cited as a classic example of Radio 4 'dumbing down'. I think there was a sharp intake

BY PAUL MCCANN
Media Editor

of breath in some quarters at the thought of a Radio 1 DJ coming over to Radio 4."

Another winner was Trevor McDonald who was named newscaster of the year for his work on ITN's now-defunct *News at Ten* programme.

In his acceptance speech McDonald criticised Channel 5 for moving its evening news to 6pm and running an advertising campaign claiming that his new 6.30 ITV bulletin repeated Channel 5's stories.

Johnny Vaughan, presenter of *The Big Breakfast*, was named commercial television broadcaster of the year, while *The Big Breakfast* itself was named Channel 4 programme of the year.

STEVE RICHARDS



The politics of Europe are now almost impossible to control

IN THE WEDNESDAY REVIEW PAGE 3

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Rescue workers searching wreckage from the train after it collided with a truck on a level crossing in Illinois. Ten passengers were unaccounted for. John Zisch/EPA.

Thirteen die in US train crash

RESCUE WORKERS were yesterday searching the wreckage of an Amtrak passenger train that collided with a lorry carrying steel, killing at least 13 people. Another 100 were injured, some seriously.

The collision occurred on Monday night at a level crossing in Illinois, 50 miles south of Chicago. Many of those killed and injured were settling into their beds in a sleeper car, near the head of the train that was making the overnight journey from Chicago to New Orleans. The impact sent car-

BY DAVID USBORNE
in New York

riages and engines careening off the tracks. Some carriages were concentrated to a fraction of their size and one of the engines was split in two.

"All of a sudden, everything just started crashing and catching on fire and people hollering and running. It was awful," said Blanche Jones, one of the passengers. "We were trying to get out. We couldn't find a way out. That was the most devastating thing of all."

Working overnight, emergency crews pulled 13 bodies from the train, called *City of New Orleans*. Officials warned, however, that of the 216 who had been aboard the train, another 10 were still missing. By morning, "empty" had been spray-painted on those carriages free of passengers.

Amtrak is bedevilled by problems at level crossings. There are about 250,000 of them on its tracks across the country, and not all are equipped with barriers. Of the 245 Amtrak accidents reported in 1997,

about half were the result of collisions with motor vehicles.

This crossing did have lights and barriers and officials were trying to determine yesterday whether they were working properly on Monday. The lorry had just left a steel plant nearby. Its cab was still intact and the driver survived the crash.

The train, which had 16 carriages in all, mostly double-decker passenger cars, would normally have been travelling at about 80mph along the stretch of track where the accident occurred. If the driver of

the train saw the lorry, he still would have needed at least 10,000ft to halt the train.

Rescue workers were hampered during the night by thick smoke from fires in one of the carriages and one of the engines. Officials said 101 passengers and crew were taken to nearby hospitals for treatment. Of those, 11 were listed in critical condition yesterday, and 19 in serious condition.

Only last week, Amtrak unveiled a new high-speed train, modelled on the French TGV, which will begin serving its

north-east corridor between Washington and Boston this autumn. The train will travel at speeds of more than 150mph, and Amtrak has been at pains to underline its safety.

Amtrak has struggled for years with low budgets and a patchy safety image. Its worst accident happened in September 1993, when a train en route from New Orleans to Los Angeles plunged into a river in southern Alabama after a bridge pier destroyed a bridge pier. Forty-seven people died in the accident.

'Tiger state' rescue plan loses its way

THE STATE of Madhya Pradesh is India's Great Outdoors: the geographical heart of the country, where you can drive for hours through sparsely populated and relatively unspoiled wilderness.

In the middle of the state is the 1,000sq km Kanha National Park, where Kipling set the *Jungle Book*. And Shere Khan's descendants are still numerous here: the state has more than 900 tigers in the wild, about one-third of the Indian total and perhaps one-fifth of all the remaining wild tigers in the world.

But according to a report released yesterday in Delhi by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), a London-based non-governmental organisation, that heritage is being frittered away at a terrifying rate.

The enemies are the tiger's usual adversaries: poachers supplying the oriental medicine trade in the Far East; industrialists building plants to strip out what remain of the state's natural resources; corrupt officials, winking at large-scale illegal logging.

This is the sad tale not only across India but also in the other "range states" where tigers survive in the wild, including Sumatra, Thailand and Russian Siberia. But the EIA chose to highlight Madhya Pradesh because in 1984 the state government, prompted by a vigorous minister of the environment with a constituency here, decided to name it "the Tiger State". The animal would be a symbol of efforts to conserve the natural resources.

At the outset much was promised. A "tiger state committee" was set up to improve the performance of the wildlife wardens. A "tiger cell" headed by a highly motivated inspector of police, Mr Rajgopal, cracked down on poachers and traders. Mr Rajgopal believed one tiger per week was being killed in the state, and one leopard per day.

BY PETER POPHAM
in New Delhi

Five years on, however, the EIA judgement is that "what started as a positive and enthusiastic initiative has been exposed as nothing more than a public-relations exercise". The state government, according to the report's authors, is "bent on exploiting its remaining natural resources to the detriment of the tiger, the forests, and the people who depend on them".

The bold initiatives have run into the sand. Inspector Rajgopal, too effective for his own good, has been transferred. The only recommendation of the tiger committee to have been implemented was putting a fax machine into the wildlife wardens' office. The fund-raising Tiger State Foundation Society has amassed a grand total of 35,000 rupees - about £500. The report says: "It is not known what this money has been used for."

Meanwhile, the abuses flourish. A diamond mine operated by the national government near the border of Panna Tiger Reserve pumps solid waste and slurry from the mine into streams. A natural corridor between two reserves, vital for the tigers' genetic resilience, has been put at risk by a huge timber fraud: 300,000 apparently healthy sal trees have been felled after it was claimed that a beetle epidemic was raging. Tigers continue to be poached, supplying a trade which, the report says, "is more organised than ever before".

Amidst the gloom, Dave Currie, founding director of the EIA, identified one chink of light: there has been a change of attitude at the level of the Indian central government. "There is now utter acceptance at central government level of the seriousness of the crisis. That is a very major change, and the first step towards addressing it," he said.

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Zimbabwe loses battalion as Congo war spreads

ZIMBABWE is reported to have lost a battalion of between 80 and 150 men in the war in Congo, where foreign-backed rebels are fighting to overthrow the regime of President Laurent Kabila.

BY ALEX DUVAL SMITH
in Johannesburg

Zimbabwe has lost so many troops in weekend fighting near the southern town of Kabinda, will come as a serious blow to President Robert Mugabe. At home, his support for President Kabila is seen as costly and self-serving.

The fight over who will control the Democratic Republic of Congo - a country the size of Western Europe - pits President Kabila and his allies in Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad against Tutsi rebels supported by Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

Hutu guerrillas from Rwanda and Burundi and Mai-Mai warriors drawn from a mixture of Bantu tribes are also fighting the Tutsi rebels. President Kabila, sensing that he is losing international sympathy, was reported to have hired the "lobbyist of the damned" in Washington, Edward von Klobberg, whose task will be to swing United States opinion away from the Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni, who was hired by President Kabila for a reported annual fee of \$500,000 (£312,000).

Mr Von Klobberg's previous clients have included the late Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu and the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein. He also advised Zaire's former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, whom Mr Kabila overthrew in 1997.

In a statement, Mr Von Klobberg said: "Mr Kabila, like his predecessor, Mr Mobutu, is now struggling to keep together a country the size of Western Europe with more than 400 ethnic groups and dialects and nearly 50 million people."

President Kabila's allies claim they are preventing the "Balkanisation" of central and southern Africa. Critics say they are only defending their own business interests.

Meanwhile, the conflict appeared to have spilled over into a ninth country yesterday as it was reported that up to 7,000 refugees from Congo had arrived in Zambia. The country has a 600-mile border with Congo. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said some 7,000 people had crossed the border since the beginning of March. Yesterday it said 900 had arrived in the space of one hour.

Serbs stall at talks and call West's bluff

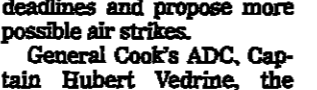
AH, THOSE teeth. And that smile. Even the grey suit glimmered in the evening light. A bit like Liberace, but Milan Milutinovic's smile, glimpsed between the forests of television cameras and heaving pressmen, went on just a little bit too long, like his speech, repeated over and over as he marched towards his official car in the rue Kleber. "We are ready to sign a political agreement, but..."

BY ROBERT FISK
in Paris

On Monday, the first day of the reconvened Paris talks on the future of Kosovo, the ethnic Albanians had agreed to an international peace plan granting them autonomy but not independence, and the introduction of Nato troops on the ground to ensure observance by all sides.

Yesterday, however, the "buts" came thick and fast as the bodyguards and journalists and policemen fought each other for space in the great amoeba-like trail of Serbia's president. But, of course, the Kosovo Albanians had to accept all of Serbia's "complaints". Yes, the Serbs were ready for implementation. But only for the political agreement. And the entry of 38,000 Nato troops to oversee the new peace?

The smile didn't fade for a second. But Mr Milutinovic's voice - like that of an army officer forced to admit a little hitch in strategy - faded just a little. "Yes, it's rejected," he muttered. "Our people clearly said what they think about it." And there we had it - predictably another big "no" from Slobodan Milosevic. Equally predictably, Nato threats will follow. Indeed, even as the Serbs and Albanians were packing up for the night, there were rumours that Major-General Robin Cook would soon be re-



Milutinovic: 'It's rejected'

turning to Paris to set yet more deadlines and propose more possible air strikes.

General Cook's ADC, Captain Hubert Vedrine, the French Foreign Minister, was already accusing the Serbs of backtracking. "The very last moment has not yet come," he told the National Assembly yesterday in words that might have been scripted by his British superior officer. "The last word has not really been uttered. But the moment of truth is not far."

The Kosovars preferred to remain silent. Wisely so. They had, after all, announced their preparedness to sign the political agreement.

"They will sign the Bible and the Koran if you ask them now," a Serb journalist confided at the police barrier in the rue Kleber. "Milosevic's guys have handed out a 20-page document of 'complaints' that tears up the original agreement." And so they had. The Serbs didn't like the judicial system proposed for Kosovo and supposedly agreed by all at last month's Rambouillet talks.

British members of Nato's extraction force in Macedonia patrol at Skopje yesterday as they wait for a peace mission to Kosovo

Kosovo dissidents reject deal

THE KOSOVO Albanians' agreement to the Western peace plan for the province was thrown into doubt yesterday after a splinter group of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) denounced the deal.

BY EMMA DALY
in Ljubovac

"Remi". Last month he told William Walker, chief of the international monitoring mission in Kosovo, that he would never disarm his forces, even though the peace deal required it.

Yugoslav troops continued their military offensive in Kosovo yesterday, concentrating on the triangle of land between Vucitrin, Srbica and Mitrovica, and forcing KLA rebels to withdraw from the area. After they captured the village of Vrbica, huge plumes of smoke were visible as buildings were set ablaze. Tank shells crashed into the villages of Ljubovac, Osijan and Galica.

The army has embarked on a drive westwards, aimed at subduing the KLA heartlands on the border with Albania. The action threatens dozens of Albanian villages in the east of Kosovo and yesterday hundreds of civilians began the trek west out of Srbica and Glogovac, where they hope to find refuge.

Their fears were heightened by reports that a column of Serbian armoured vehicles, including seven T-72 tanks, had already moved into Srbica, known in Albanian as "Skenderaj".

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Seventh IOC man may be sacked

BY PAUL LASHMAR

THE OLYMPIC movement's second most powerful figure may face expulsion when the International Olympic Committee begins its emergency meeting in Switzerland today.

The IOC's investigating team has been examining new evidence against Un Yong Kim, a South Korean. He would be the seventh member upon whose sacking the full committee will decide.

The inquiry commission, headed by the vice-president, Dick Pound, of Canada, met yesterday after receiving "some letters and documents". Until the Salt Lake City bribery scandal broke last December, Mr Kim, 67, was expected to take over in 2001 from the president, Juan Samaranch.

In Mr Pound's second report, published last week, there were three allegations against Mr Kim. According to the report, he had elicited favours for two of his children and a Russian teenager from the Salt Lake City committee which was bidding for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. The commission recommended that Mr Kim receive "the most serious of warnings".

Six other members were recommended for expulsion: Agustín Arroyo of Ecuador; Jean-Claude Ganga of Congo; Zein El Abdin Abdel Gadir of Sudan; Lamine Keita of Mali; Sergio Santander of Chile and Samoa's Paul Wallwork.

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£1,259.88, £1,277.24, £1,294.74, £1,312.38, £1,330.16, £1,348.08, £1,366.14, £1,384.34, £1,402.68, £1,421.16, £1,439.78, £1,458.54, £1,477.44, £1,496.48, £1,515.66, £1,534.98, £1,554.44, £1,574.04, £1,593.78, £1,613.66, £1,633.68, £1,653.84, £1,674.14, £1,694.58, £1,715.16, £1,735.88, £1,756.74, £1,777.74, £1,798.88, £1,819.16, £1,839.58, £1,860.14, £1,880.84, £1,901.68, £1,922.66, £1,943.78, £1,964.94, £1,986.24, £2,007.68, £2,029.26, £2,050.98, £2,072.84, £2,094.84, £2,116.98, £2,139.26, £2,161.68, £2,184.24, £2,206.94, £2,229.78, £2,252.76, £2,275.88, £2,299.14, £2,322.54, £2,346.08, £2,369.76, £2,393.58, £2,417.54, £2,441.64, £2,465.88, £2,490.26, £2,514.78, £2,539.44, £2,564.24, £2,589.18, £2,614.26, £2,639.48, £2,664.84, £2,690.34, £2,715.98, £2,741.76, £2,767.68, £2,793.74, £2,819.94, £2,846.28, £2,872.76, £2,899.38, £2,926.14, £2,953.04, £2,980.08, £3,007.26, £3,034.58, £3,061.94, £3,089.44, £3,117.08, £3,144.86, £3,172.78, £3,200.84, £3,229.04, £3,257.38, £3,285.86, £3,314.48, £3,343.24, £3,372.14, £3,401.18, £3,430.36, £3,459.68, £3,489.14, £3,518.74, £3,548.48, £3,578.36, £3,608.38, £3,638.54, £3,668.84, £3,699.28, £3,729.86, £3,760.58, £3,791.44, £3,822.44, £3,853.58, £3,884.86, £3,916.28, £3,947.84, £3,979.54, £4,011.38, £4,043.36, £4,075.48, £4,107.74, £4,140.14, £4,172.68, £4,205.36, £4,238.18, £4,271.14, £4,304.24, £4,337.48, £4,370.86, £4,404.38, £4,438.04, £4,471.84, £4,505.78, £4,539.86, £4,574.08, £4,608.44, £4,642.94, £4,677.58, £4,712.36, £4,747.28, £4,782.34, £4,817.54, £4,852.88, £4,888.36, £4,923.98, £4,959.74, £4,995.64, £5,031.68, £5,067.86, £5,104.18, £5,140.64, £5,177.24, £5,213.98, £5,250.86, £5,287.88, £5,325.04, £5,362.34, £5,399.78, £5,437.36, £5,475.08, £5,512.94, £5,550.94, £5,589.08, £5,627.36, £5,665.78, £5,704.34, £5,743.04, £5,781.88, £5,820.86, £5,859.98, £5,899.24, £5,938.64, £5,978.18, £6,017.86, £6,057.68, £6,097.64, £6,137.74, £6,177.98, £6,218.36, £6,258.88, £6,299.54, £6,340.34, £6,381.28, £6,422.36, £6,463.58, £6,504.94, £6,546.44, £6,588.08, £6,629.86, £6,671.78, £6,713.84, £6,756.04, £6,798.38, £6,840.86, £6,883.48, £6,926.24, £6,969.14, £7,012.18, £7,055.36, £7,098.68, £7,142.14, £7,185.74, £7,229.48, £7,273.36, £7,317.38, £7,361.54, £7,405.84, £7,450.28, £7,494.86, £7,539.58, £7,584.34, £7,629.24, £7,674.28, £7,719.46, £7,764.68, £7,809.94, £7,855.34, £7,900.88, £7,946.56, £7,992.38, £8,038.34, £8,084.44, £8,130.68, £8,176.96, £8,223.38, £8,269.94, £8,316.64, £8,363.48, £8,410.46, £8,457.58, £8,504.84, £8,552.24, £8,599.78, £8,647.46, £8,695.28, £8,743.24, £8,791.34, £8,839.58, £8,887.96, £8,936.48, £8,985.14, £9,033.94, £9,082.88, £9,131.96, £9,181.18, £9,230.54, £9,280.04, £9,329.68, £9,379.46, £9,429.38, £9,479.44, £9,529.64, £9,579.98, £9,630.46, £9,681.08, £9,731.84, £9,782.74, £9,833.78, £9,884.96, £9,936.28, £9,987.74, £10,039.34, £10,091.08, £10,142.98, £10,195.04, £10,247.26, £10,299.64, £10,352.18, £10,404.88, £10,457.74, £10,510.76, £10,563.94, £10,617.28, £10,670.78, £10,724.44, 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Rain, rain, rain all winter – and it could last 20 years

IN THE Pacific North-west, they are used to rain. It is what makes the forests lush and green. It is what keeps more Californians from upping sticks and moving there. Rain is what they know. Rain is what they can handle.

So when it rained uninter-ruptedly for almost the whole of February, the citizens of Oregon and Washington kept a brave face. When the weather forecasters pointed out that the rain has been relentless since early November, and threatens to stay that way until May, there were mur- murs of dismay, certainly, but nothing to upset the prevailing stoicism.

Then, a few days ago, came the proverbial raindrop too far. A particularly ugly storm accompanied by high winds played havoc with the elec- tricity supply, toppled trees and – horror of horrors – knocked out the coffee service on a commuter ferry plying the thin strip of Puget Sound from Bainbridge Island to Seattle. Well, that was just too much.

"Of course people com-

AMERICAN TIMES PACIFIC NORTH-WEST

plained," said Susan Harris- Huether, spokeswoman for Washington state's ferry ser- vices. "If they don't get their latte..."

And now North-westerners are venting their anguish in the only ways they know how – blaming the forces of evil in the world (California, mainly) and cracking jokes.

Like the one about the woman who visits Seattle and realises that it has not stopped raining for a week. So she stops a kid on the street and asks: "Hey, does it ever stop raining around here?" To which he answers: "I wouldn't know. I'm only six."

The truth is, the region has gone through the wettest win- ter since records began.

Barely one day in five has been dry over the past three months. There have been mudslides and floods on the roads. Up in the Cascade mountains, they had to close

down resorts while they spent two days digging chairlifts out of the snow.

Most spectacularly, an oil tanker crashed ashore in southern Oregon a month ago, spilling around 70,000 gallons of oil, killing birds and threat- ening shellfish stocks.

Because of the relentless storms, salvage crews have found it almost impossible to stop the ship, the *New Carissa*, from drifting and causing more damage. Ten days ago, a huge tugboat tried to tow the wreckage and its remaining cargo of 130,000 gallons of oil offshore for a deep-sea burial. But one of the towing bridges snapped and the ship's carcass was washed back to shore.

According to meteorolo- gists, this winter could be the harbinger of a general change for the worse. The North-west is subject to weather move- ments called Pacific decadal oscillations, and a 20-year pe-

riod of relative dryness may be giving way to a wet period that is likely to last for just as long. On top of that is La Nina, the Pacific current pattern that pushed last year's Californian storms several hundred miles north.

Republicans have sought to lay the poor climate at the door of the Democratic state administration, saying a lot of "liberal hot air" has played havoc with the environment. And former governor Mike Lowry, for one, seems willing to accept the blame.

"Environmentalists like me want more wetlands," he said. "And I'm getting them right outside in the parking lot."

Some, of course, see divine intervention in all those rain- clouds. Retribution, perhaps, for excessive exploitation of the beautiful landscape. Or, as the former Seattle deputy mayor Bob Royer sees it, God's scheme to put those uppity Californians in their place. "This is the only way to get all those newcomers to move back south," he said.

ANDREW GUMBEL



Driving through flooded roads has become a way of life in parts of rain-drenched Oregon

AP

IS PICKING A WINNING PEP POT LUCK?

New research can help you reduce the odds.

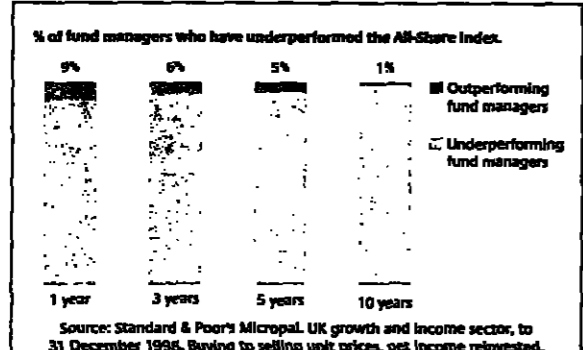
Trawling through the financial pages for your last PEP is a bit like entering a crowded bazaar with store holders shouting at you from all angles. Who do you buy from? The one who shouts the loudest or the one that 'promises' you the best deal?

Ideally, before making such a decision you'll want the added confidence and reassurance that can only come from a truly impartial and credible source. That's why we asked The WM Company, one of the world's leading investment performance consultants, to shine an independent light on the key issues.

If you can spare five minutes to read their findings, we promise it will make the task of choosing your last PEP considerably easier. We start with a remarkable fact that has led to one of the biggest debates ever in the investment industry, and which triggered the research...

THE INDUSTRY'S BEST KEPT SECRET

Before we entered the PEP market, we looked at the hundreds of PEPs on offer and discovered that less than one in ten actively managed funds outperformed the FT-SE Actuaries' All-Share Index of the top 828 UK companies – the industry benchmark for performance.



'Tracker' funds, which simply track their chosen index by investing in all the companies that make it up, are not new. But before Virgin's high profile launch four years ago, trackers accounted for only a tiny part of the UK investment market. Why, you might ask?

A TRULY OBJECTIVE VIEW

It's this issue that we asked WM to consider. After all, the first decision you need to make when choosing your PEP is whether to go for a tracker fund or to try to find an active fund manager who can beat it.

WM studied the performance of funds in the UK Growth & Income sector over 20 years to the end of 1998. These funds can be directly compared with the FT-SE All-Share Index.



They found that in any five year period, active funds had around a one in four chance of outperforming a tracker. Over longer periods, they fared even worse.

These figures take into account annual management charges but not the initial charges levied by active funds. Allowing for all charges reduces the odds still further and it's easy to see why.

The average actively managed PEP has total charges over a five year period of 11.5% (source: Best PEP). Compare this with a typical tracker fund with no initial charge and a 1% annual management charge (just 5% over five years) and it becomes clear what a tough job an active manager has on his hands. He needs to outperform the market by 6.5% just to keep pace with a tracker!

BUT ARE ACTIVE FUNDS A GAMBLE WORTH TAKING?

It would seem not. WM found, not surprisingly, that to give them a chance of outperforming trackers, active funds took on more risk. This resulted in wild fluctuations in performance which were not generally associated with higher returns. In WM's own words "active investors were not being rewarded for the extra risk."

THERE'S WORSE NEWS TO COME

Even so, many PEP investors are still willing to try and upset the odds by finding that elusive outperforming fund manager. And the generally accepted way of choosing is to look at a fund's past performance.

However, this is the area where WM's findings are most disturbing. They concluded that, as a whole, the top performing actively managed funds over a five year period had no more than a random chance of being the top performing funds over the following five year period.

What's more, the evidence suggested that the very poor performers actually had a better chance of being the stars of the future than the former stars themselves!

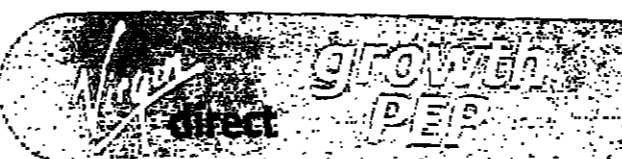
So what hope then is there for finding that elusive manager?

NARROW THE FIELD

If your instinct is still to gamble, that's fine provided you're happy with the odds. If, however, you feel the risks of active management are just not worth it and trackers offer more for less, read on...

THE VIRGIN GROWTH PEP

- A proven approach to investment. By tracking the FT-SE All-Share Index, the Virgin Growth PEP has consistently remained among the top performing PEPs, month after month, year after year.
- 20% a year. Tax free. That's the average return earned by Virgin Growth PEP customers who started investing when we launched four years ago.
- Lower charges than 97% of all other PEPs. No salesmen, no commission and no expensive fund managers means no initial charges whatsoever and an annual management charge of just 1%.
- The market leader. We now look after £1.4 billion on behalf of over 200,000 customers making the Virgin Growth PEP the most popular index tracking PEP in the UK.



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Forbes unveils presidency bid on the Net

THE MILLIONAIRE publisher Steve Forbes launched his second campaign for the US presidency yesterday – on the Internet – and promised to wage a "new, information age campaign".

The <Forbes2000.com> website sprang into life shortly before 10am, after teasing visitors with a "stand-by" notice for the previous 12 hours. In a recorded message, Mr Forbes said: "Today, I'm happy to announce the beginning of my campaign" and described it as "a national crusade to restore Ronald Reagan's vision of hope and prosperity for all Americans".

Practically all the presidential candidates (and many congressional candidates) have their own websites, but Mr Forbes is the first to use it for his declaration.

Boasting news of his campaign "first, fast and unfil-tered", the website said that Mr Forbes was offering "a dramatic reform agenda to defend America's economy, security and values" and prepare every child to "compete and succeed in the information age economy".

Mr Forbes is the fourth Republican to announce formally a presidential bid, but another six have already made it clear that they are in the running, in-

cluding the two favourites, George W Bush and Elizabeth Dole. While these two have outlined priorities and programmes that tend towards the Republican centre, Mr Forbes, 51, has moved, if anything, further to the right since his last campaign – coupling his former tax-cutting zeal with a firmer moral pitch.

Mr Forbes, who spent \$32m (£20m) on his last campaign, is a proponent of the idea of a "flat tax", which would set a single, low, income and sales tax rate and abolish most concessions and allowances.

In theory, this is designed to make the tax burden fairer, but its opponents argue variously that it would penalise the poor, require too high a basic tax rate to be attractive, and minimise the redistributive function of taxation.

A firmer moral dimension to his campaign could also dilute Mr Forbes' appeal, driving some supporters away and failing to attract new ones.

Even if taking the high moral ground gives a Republican candidate an advantage, candidates like the Christian conservative, Gary Bauer, already hold that constituency and are unlikely to cede it.

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**HIGH
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**Arbes unveils
residency
on the Net**

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THE INDEPENDENT
Journal of the American People 1999

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Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the *Agrobacterium* suspension on the transformation efficiency of *Agrobacterium* strains. The concentration of the *Agrobacterium* suspension was 10⁶ cells/ml (○), 10⁷ cells/ml (□), 10⁸ cells/ml (△), and 10⁹ cells/ml (◇). The error bars represent the standard deviation of three independent experiments.

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Business & City Editor, Jeremy Warner
News desk: 0171-293 2636 Fax: 0171-293 2098

BUSINESS

BRIEFING

BUSINESS REVIEW

FANCY FOOTWORK

NEW YORK TRADING SESSIONS ARE SET TO THE TOP OF BUSINESS



Inside British American Tobacco, the company which gave up its bad habits and came out smoking, page 5

The phone bill revolution, page 4

Revisited: the liquidator's liquidator, page 8

Photo: Hannah McLean, Diana Cayle, Derek Pate, Jo Davis and The Times

The 12-page Business Review, free every Wednesday

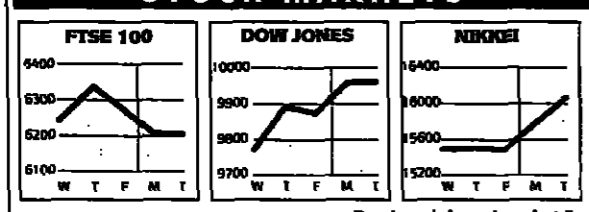
GM crop ban 'disastrous' for EU

NOVARTIS, the Swiss life sciences group, warned yesterday that a ban on genetically modified crops could destroy European farming. Wolfgang Sarno, head of agribusiness, said the moratorium backed by environmental groups and the UK Conservative Party would have a "disastrous" effect. Novartis's 1998 net income was \$16.1bn (£2.6bn).

Tarmac nears £1.5bn demerger

TARMAC moved closer to a £1.5bn demerger of its building materials and construction divisions with plans to inject most of its £317m debt into the materials subsidiary. Chief executive Sir Neville Simms is to become chairman and chief executive of the construction company; the building materials group will be led by Roy Harrison.

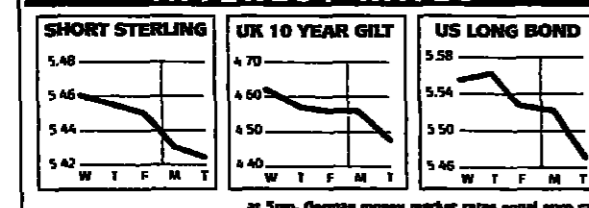
STOCK MARKETS



Dow Jones index and graph at 5pm

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk High	52 wk Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	6201.90	-4.30	-0.08	6365.40	4599.20	2.63
FTSE 250	5519.70	0.80	0.02	5970.90	4247.60	3.06
FTSE 350	2957.30	-1.80	-0.06	3024.90	2210.40	2.69
FTSE All Share	2862.81	-1.21	-0.04	2933.83	2143.53	2.73
FTSE SmallCap	1315.80	9.20	0.69	1393.16	894.78	3.43
FTSE Fledgling	1290.20	3.90	0.30	1517.10	1046.20	4.24
FTSE AIM	858.30	-1.70	-0.20	1146.90	761.30	1.08
FTSE Europe 100	2807.97	11.51	0.40	3078.27	2018.15	2.06
FTSE Europe 300	1255.25	3.24	0.26	1332.07	880.63	1.95
Dow Jones	9966.82	9.44	0.10	9970.15	7400.30	1.59
Nikkei	16072.62	293.22	1.85	17111.59	12787.90	0.88
Hong Kong	10911.05	74.39	0.69	11256.16	6944.78	3.27
Dax	5094.63	65.39	1.30	6177.83	3833.71	1.70
S&P 500	1309.00	1.86	0.14	1307.54	923.32	1.23
Nasdaq	2449.35	17.86	0.74	2533.44	1357.09	0.28
Toronto 300	6623.00	14.20	0.22	7837.70	5320.90	1.60
Brazil Bovespa	10571.67	243.42	2.34	12339.14	4575.69	5.84
Belgium BeX20	3348.24	4.44	0.13	3713.21	2696.26	2.10
Amsterdam AEX	540.64	5.59	1.03	600.65	386.58	1.90
France CAC 40	4186.93	1.23	0.03	4404.94	2881.21	1.86
Milan MIB30	36806.00	-263.00	-0.71	39170.00	24175.00	1.11
Madrid IBEX 35	10213.90	92.90	0.92	10889.80	6869.90	1.71
Irish Overall	5293.83	-38.15	-0.72	5581.70	3734.57	1.54
2 Korea Comp	601.83	9.81	1.66	651.95	277.37	0.36
Australia ASX	2892.20	2.70	0.09	2990.60	2348.70	3.09

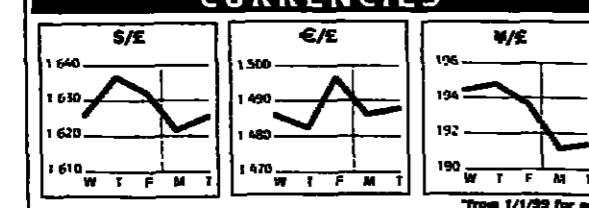
INTEREST RATES



at 5pm. German money market rates equal euro rate

MONEY MARKET RATES					BOND YIELDS			
Index	3 month	Yr chg	1 Year	Yr chg	10 year	Yr chg	Long bond	Yr chg
UK	5.42	-2.13	5.38	-2.15	4.49	-1.42	4.50	-1.34
US	5.00	-0.68	5.28	-0.50	5.10	0.44	5.47	0.39
Japan	0.19	-0.52	0.23	-0.44	1.88	0.12	2.98	0.62
Germany	3.04	-0.47	3.03	-0.70	3.58	-0.90	4.96	-0.48

CURRENCIES



From 1/1/99 for \$/£

Index	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6347	+0.23%	1.6680
Euro	1.4879	+0.40%	1.4079
Yen	191.28	+0.25	216.40
£ index	102.30	0.00	106.80
S index	107.90	0.00	109.00

OTHER INDICATORS

Index	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	12.10	0.09	11.61
Gold (\$)	282.95	-3.25	294.35
Shelter (\$)	5.06	-0.15	6.12
GDP	115.40	3.00	112.04
RPI	163.40	2.40	159.37
Base Rates	5.50	7.25	

www.bloomberg.com/uk

SOURCE: BLOOMBERG

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Australia (\$)	2.4903	Mexican (nuevo peso)	14.38
Austria (schillings)	19.87	Netherlands (guilders)	3.1901
Belgium (francs)	58.44	New Zealand (\$)	2.9338
Canada (\$)	2.4032	Norway (kroner)	12.45
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8347	Portugal (escudos)	288.31
Denmark (kroner)	10.81	Saudi Arabia (rials)	5.8884
Finland (markka)	8.6382	Singapore (\$)	2.6467
France (francs)	9.4987	South Africa (rand)	9.6274
Germany (marks)	2.8425	Spain (pesetas)	240.20
Greece (drachmas)	466.38	Sweden (kronor)	13.01
Hong Kong (\$)	12.15	Switzerland (francs)	2.3212
Ireland (pounds)	1.1371	Thailand (bahts)	54.26
India (rupees)	61.67	Turkey (liras)	564.430
Israel (shekels)	6.0132	USA (\$)	1.5803
Italy (lira)	2814		
Japan (yen)	186.56		
Malaysia (ringgits)	5.8362		
Malta (lira)	0.6178		

Rates for indication purposes only

Source: Thomas Cook



Traders on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange celebrating as the Dow passes the 10,000 level for the first time Mike Segar/Reuters

Dow breaks 10,000 barrier

THE DOW 10,000 arrived yesterday, writes David Osborne in New York. History was made and the feel-good American economy that has been powering stocks higher for the past four and a half years suddenly felt even better. Then, in the blink of an eye - or the pop of a champagne cork - it was gone again. The five-digit Dow was four digits again.

The breaking of the mythical barrier happened at 9.50am, just 30 minutes into the day's trading. All heads on the New York Stock Exchange floor turned to the flashing numbers and there it was: Industrial Average up 41.35 points at 10,001.12. There were cheers and applause until, just as quickly, the numbers began to sink back to the ninety-nine hundreds.

The index, a composite of the share prices of 30 US blue-chip companies, has surged no less than 6,000 points since 1985.

Goldman staff to receive \$360,000 payouts

BY DAVID OSBORNE
in New York
AND ANDREW GARFIELD
in London

GOLDMAN SACHS' 13,000 staff are to be given shares worth on average \$360,000, when the firm goes public in May with a price tag of up to \$23.4bn, according to figures released by the Wall Street investment bank yesterday.

The value of the shares being given to the firm's 221 partners in exchange for their existing holdings works out at \$52m on average, although the figure hides a wide disparity in holdings, with those of some individuals likely to be in the hundreds of millions.

The figures are included in the official filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission, which vets all public offerings.

One of the biggest surprises is the level of basic salary of the top five partners of the firm, which was revealed for the first time yesterday as a mere \$600,000, although the figure does not include their substantial bonus payments.

The stock sale should be worth up to \$3.45bn (£2.1bn) and account for as much as 14.7 per cent of the company. That will make it the second-largest initial public offering (IPO) in New York this decade, second to the \$4.4bn public offering in Conoco last October.

The sale will mark the 130-year-old firm's second attempt at going public. Plans for an earlier share sale were abruptly shelved in September following turmoil in the financial markets and a sharp slump in profits.

In the SEC filing, Goldman said it planned to sell as many as 60 million shares at \$40 to \$50 each. That would value the bank at \$2.4bn, about the same as JP Morgan. About 42 million shares will be sold by Goldman itself.

Colt Telecom, which led Monday's retreat, headed the blue chips' risers, rallying 56.5p to 995.5p.

Airbus to take £400m charge for 'black hole'

BY MICHAEL HARRISON
Business Editor

AIRBUS INDUSTRIE, the European aircraft manufacturer, is being forced to set aside around £400m to cover a "black hole" in its accounts relating to past losses on jet orders.

The disclosure came as it emerged that the four Airbus partners, including British Aerospace, have formally applied to their governments for up to £2bn in launch aid for the proposed 600-seat super-jumbo, the A3XX.

B&E, which has a 30 per cent share of Airbus, is thought to have applied for around £400m in repayable launch funding.

The other partners are Aérospatiale of France, Daimler-Benz Aerospace of Germany and Casa of Spain.

Noel Forgeard, chief executive of Airbus, said he was con-

sistent the A3XX programme could be launched by mid-2000. However, he indicated that the transformation of Airbus into a single corporate entity was now unlikely to be completed before autumn next year, 18 months behind schedule.

The £400m provision is to cover losses on orders booked in the three years from 1995 to 1997 when Airbus and Boeing of the US fought a savage price war.

Previously Airbus has supported aircraft sales with a package of support measures including guarantees, spares and pilot training, but has not taken them as an upfront cost. From now on it will shoulder a much bigger share of these

costs, and financing charges, at the time a sale is made.

Mr Forgeard refused to disclose figures. But it is thought the partners have agreed to take £200m of the provision in the 1998 accounts, leaving the consortium nursing a loss of £120m.

It has also taken a £30m to £40m provision against a cancelled order from the Philippines. This means that, leaving aside provisions, Airbus as a consortium made a profit of about £40m last year. However, industry estimates of the underlying profitability of Airbus, stripping out exceptional charges and exchange-rate losses, range from £400m to £450m.

The tightening of Airbus's accounting is in readiness for its change into a conventional public company, with shareholders

and a proper balance sheet. However, progress on this and the exchange of valuations of partners' Airbus assets will not occur until Aérospatiale is privatised this summer. It will then take a further year to complete the change.

The A3XX, a double-decker aircraft capable seating 550 to 680 passengers, will cost £10bn to develop and will sell for between £213m and £246m, Mr Forgeard said. Spending on the programme by the partners increases by 50 per cent this year, with 1,000 staff now working on development in Britain, France, Germany and Spain.

The aim is to start marketing the A3XX to airlines at the end of this year, launch the programme in mid-2000 and bring it into service in 2005. Airbus be-

lieves there is demand for up to 1,400 such aircraft over the next 20 years.

Despite reports to the contrary, it is understood that British Airways remains a strong supporter of the A3XX and does not want to see any slip-slide in the timetable.

About one-third of the programme will be with risk and revenue-sharing partners outside the Airbus consortium. One-third would come from the partners and the final third from government launch aid.

Risk-sharing partners Airbus is talking to include Pöcker, Saab, Finmeccanica, Mitsubishi of Japan and Aerostructures Corporation of the US.

Mr Forgeard said he did not expect Boeing to launch a rival jet in advance of Airbus.

Shunned Unigate in hostile Terranova bid

BY NIGEL COPE
Associate City Editor

UNIGATE yesterday launched the first hostile bid in the food sector for more than six years by tabling a £228.5m offer for Terranova Foods, the chilled foods company demerged from Hillsdown Holdings in October.

The cash offer, at 135p per share, was immediately rejected by Terranova management. It said the bid was "inadequate, opportunistic and fails to reflect the current value or future prospects".

Terranova shares soared by 31p to 135.5p, indicating prospects for a higher bid.

Analysts said Unigate would have to raise its offer price to around 140p to 150p to secure victory. It is thought some of Terranova's institutions will be looking for a reasonable premium to the 140p price at which Hillsdown last autumn.

The bid will be seen as a test

of nerve for Sir Ross Buckland, chief executive of Unigate. He walked away from a £1.6bn bid for the whole of Hillsdown last year, having principally been interested in the chilled food operation. Over the weekend an attempt to gain an agreed deal failed when a 125p Unigate approach was rejected.

Yesterday Sir Ross said he had only been interested in the chilled food business last year, but Hillsdown's reluctance to sell it separately forced him to make an offer for the whole company.

Unigate, whose interests span dairy, chilled foods and distribution operations, said the deal had "compelling logic". It highlighted scope for cost savings and synergies, with Unigate adding its buying and distribu-

tion to Terranova's brands. It said Terranova's Buxted chickens would fit with its own Malton pig division. Unigate's Shape brand could be extended across Terranova's ready meal and sandwich ranges.

Analysts say there is scope for cost savings of at least £25m a year and that the deal could be earnings enhancing at up to 200p. Unigate is under pressure to use its £190m cash pile.

This is the first hostile bid in food since Tomkins won control of Banks Foods McDougall in 1992. Other bidders could enter the ring for Terranova, with Tomkins a candidate.

Sir Ross said: "Terranova has insufficient scale to take advantage of the opportunities open to it. This deal offers certainty to shareholders."

Unigate shares closed unchanged at 410.5p.

City hails public finance figures

BY DIANE COYLE
Economics Editor

THE GOVERNMENT'S finances were in such good shape last month, according to official figures yesterday, that analysts concluded the surplus in 1998-99 would be higher than Gordon Brown predicted in his Budget last week.

The Public Sector Net Cash Requirement (PSNCR) showed a surplus of £1.5bn in February, taking the cumulative surplus for the first 11 months of the financial year to £15.1bn. The Budget estimated the full-year surplus would be £5.2bn.

Although March has traditionally seen a big deficit because of an end-of-year spending surge, this pattern has been less pronounced in recent years. Many analysts are therefore predicting a bigger surplus of £8-10bn.

However, the Treasury downplayed these hopes yes-

terday, suggesting the pattern of public spending could be reverting to the traditional profile.

Even so, yesterday's figures clearly show the public sector's healthy financial position. Net borrowing was in surplus by £1.1bn in February, taking the cumulative total to £2.7bn compared with £3.3bn at the same stage last financial year.

Income tax receipts were buoyant in February thanks to self-assessment. But Customs & Excise receipts have fallen since the new year.

Government expenditure is accelerating as the year-end approaches, from April to February, running 26bn higher than the first 11 months of 1997/98.

AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

BLUE CHIPS lost ground for the third day in succession. Footsie eased 4.9 points to 6,201.9 after at one time sporting a 62.8 point gain. But supporting shares were more resilient with the mid cap index edging 0.8 higher to 5,519.7 and the small cap rising 9.2 to 2,375.8.

Although the market endured a generally featureless session, trading was again busy with share turnover topping 1.1 billion.

Colt Telecom, which led

SAO PAULO

BRAZILIAN STOCKS climbed 2.5 per cent to reach their highest level since before the currency crisis last year.

Sao Paulo's Bovespa index broke through the 10,000 barrier for the first time since August. After an 8.5 per cent rise on Monday, the index has risen over 11 per cent in two days.

The surge in share prices is powered by increasing optimism that Brazil's economy has begun its recovery from the currency crisis which began seven months ago.

TOKYO

STOCKS surged through the 16,000 barrier for the first time since August last year on the back of foreign buying and upbeat comments from the Bank of Japan. The Nikkei 225 closed up 1.88 per cent, or 293.22 points, at 16,072.82.

Traders said foreign buyers were increasingly piling into the market as the yen rose against the dollar. Institutions were afraid of missing the effect of the rise, which boosts the value of dollar-denominated portfolios. "The bear market that began in December 1989 ended in March 1999," said one analyst.

PARIS

THE BLUE-CHIP CAC-40 index ended marginally up 0.03 per cent at 4,186.35 as Wall Street tracked back. "Everyone was waiting for the Dow to hit 10,000 and when it did we saw a wave of sell orders," said one market-maker.

Renault slumped 5.45 per cent amid selling by US clients worried about the risks of an alliance with Nissan. France Telecom closed down 1.77 per cent ahead of results today, dragging the CAC down 9 points. But a 3.35 per cent rise at the insurance giant Axa countered France Telecom's slide.

FRANKFURT

THE STOCK MARKET continued its rally in the wake of Oskar Lafontaine's resignation, closing up nearly 1 per cent. The Xetra DAX index rose 47.70 points to end at 5,090.93.

Lufthansa, the national airline, jumped 4.5 per cent on news that it is to bid for a stake in Thai Airways, while Preussag jumped 4.5 per cent as it received the green light to sell 50 per cent of its shipbuilding unit to Deutsche Babcock. Merger activity between the French banks rippled across the border, lifting Deutsche Bank by 3.4 per cent.

هكذا من الأصل

SPORT

'Teeton Mill can inject a burst of speed but I think Florida Pearl travels better... and Dunwoody's an ice-cool guy'

Dillon master of the betting odds



THE BRIAN VINER INTERVIEW

THE CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL is upon us. Yesterday, the phenomenal Istabraq won the Champion Hurdle for the second successive year. If he hadn't, the casualty department at Cheltenham General would have been full of race-goers needing their stomachs pumped, having grudgingly digested their hats. The outcome of tomorrow's Gold Cup, however, is much harder to predict. Mike Dillon, the public relations director at Ladbrokes, fancies Florida Pearl to pip Teeton Mill, and punters might be wise to put their money where his mouth is. "Teeton Mill's a very good traveller," he says. "He can inject a burst of speed during a race. But I think Florida Pearl travels better. He's been brought along very well, he knows the territory, and Dunwoody's an ice-cool guy."

Dillon, a hugely engaging Mancunian, is not only the public face of Ladbrokes, he also helps set their horse-racing odds. And he has a pretty good record in the Gold Cup. Seven years ago, he reckoned that the favourite, Carvill's Hill, was unlikely to win. "He was ridden by Scudamore, trained by Martin Pipe, both all-conquering, and he had won the Welsh National very easily, but I felt he had an Achilles heel, that on an undulating track over fast ground he would be vulnerable."

The odds were set accordingly, with Ladbrokes offering a better price than every other bookmaker. "We were even when everyone else was odds on. When they were 6-4, we were 2-1. We took fortunes. And when he got beaten by Cool Ground, it was a great result for the firm, or so I thought. About five minutes after the race we found out that an unemployed joiner from Portsmouth or somewhere had had these 10p doubles and trebles, and that the last leg was Cool Ground, a 25-1 shot in the Gold Cup. He won almost £800,000 for about seven quid. That's the magic of the game, you see. We go from euphoria to total despair."

The unemployed joiner was called Dick Mussell, and he has an entire file to himself at Ladbrokes' head office in north-west London. Dillon shows it to me, laughing with the abandon of a man who can afford to be magnanimous. During the three-day Cheltenham Festival, the bookmaking industry expects to take around £100m in bets, an average of £5m per race, and Ladbrokes has a quarter share of the market.

To accommodate the punters, the ever-obliging Ladbrokes are opening their Cheltenham shops at 8am, and even permitting bets in Irish punts. Meanwhile, the company has already pocketed at least £20,000 - one punter placed £40,000 at 4-1 on His Song to win yesterday's Arkle Challenge Trophy (he was unplaced), and had a further £20,000 treble on His Song, Istabraq and Florida Pearl.



Mike Dillon's white-knuckle ride: 'A big gambler called Noel Furlong had a horse called The Illiad. He backed him from 36-1 down to 6-1 and won about £2m that day'

Robert Hallam

"All Irish horses," notes Dillon. "So you needn't be Einstein to know where that bet came from."

Similarly, you needn't be Desmond Morris to know whether Dillon is enjoying himself at Cheltenham. I should think that if he's rubbing his hands gleefully, Ladbrokes are quids in. But if the knuckles are white, the punters are winning. Or perhaps just one punter. "A few years ago a big gambler called Noel Furlong had a horse called The Illiad," Dillon recalls. "He ran in the race we sponsor at Leopardstown in January, the Ladbroke, and Furlong backed him from 36-1 down to 6-1. He won about £2m that day, and then The Illiad ran in the Champion Hurdle. Furlong backed him in big multiple bets with another horse of his, who ran in the first race and absolutely dodged it. Luckily The Illiad didn't win at Cheltenham, or he'd have won about £20 million. Noel Furlong took the ring on his own that day."

In bookmaking jargon, the betting market is "the ring." And the offering of seductive odds, attracting large numbers of bets, is known as "getting a horse beaten." In the Grand National one year, Dillon got Bonanza Boy beaten, big-time. "I just couldn't see him winning. I have a set of rules when I assess a horse, and the number one rule is how well it travels. I don't like horses who have to be hustled and hustled, and

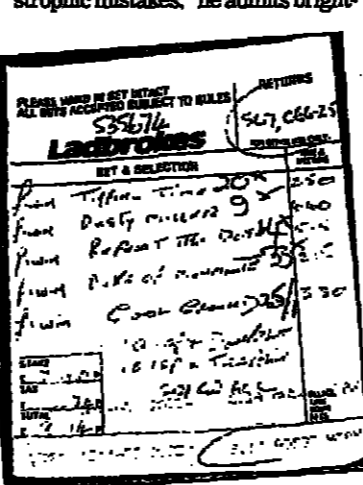
Bonanza Boy was one of those. But he was trained by the champion trainer, Martin Pipe, ridden by the champion jockey, Peter Scudamore, so I thought 'this is a real chance. All the world wants to back him and he can't win.'"

Dillon is admirably candid about his efforts to, in essence, hoodwink the punter. And that's fair enough, since plenty of punters try to hoodwink the bookie, by foul means as well as fair. Ladbrokes shop managers, particularly in horsey areas like Newmarket, are expected to hold a particularly tight rein. "If there's a selling hurdle at Plumpton on a Monday, and someone comes in off the street, someone you've never seen before, and puts on £10,000, the manager would want looking up if he didn't think the fella might know more about the race than we do."

The fixing of football matches by nobbling the floodlights is only the latest of many betting scams. Dillon recalls Ladbrokes offering odds on the results of seven-frame matches in a snooker tournament in Derby about 15 years ago. "And a fella came into one of our shops wanting to bet £2,000 at 7-1 on a particular game finishing 5-2. The manager told him the price had gone down to even. He said 'well, I'll have two grand at even, then.' It was obviously a hooky game. The manager had a ledger of all the bets and

there was nothing in the 7-0 or the 6-1 or 4-3 columns, but rows and rows of bets under 5-2."

There are other people at Ladbrokes to look after small fry like snooker, however. Dillon's overriding concern is horse racing, which represents 70 per cent of the company's £1.7bn turnover, with dog racing amounting to 20 per cent. And his daily challenge is to get a horse beaten, a challenge which on occasion, I venture, must go badly wrong. "Oh yeah, I've made some catastrophic mistakes," he admits brightly.



Passport to a fortune: The betting slip that won almost £800,000 for Dick Mussell

ly. "At Cheltenham a few years ago I didn't think a horse called Kribensis had what it took to win the Champion Hurdle. I underestimated the trainer, Michael Stoute. He was a flat trainer with only one jumper, and I thought he was playing at it. So we laid 5-1 when everyone else offered 4-1, and of course he won. I was sick as a pig." The extra unit lost Ladbrokes about a million pounds, says Dillon, blanching even now at the memory. But the chief executive of the racing division, Peter George, who now runs the whole company, was supportive. "He just told me to stick to my principles."

Sometimes, losses are borne not only stoically but cheerfully, in the knowledge that they add up to an investment in the company's future. "Every time Red Run won, we lost," says Dillon. "But we didn't mind paying out, because it increased the profile of betting. He took us off the sports pages and put us on the news pages. The same with Desert Orchid, and with Detford's Seven, which cost the industry £40 million. I know £40m is a bit of a steep advertising budget, but in the long run Detford's Seven was fantastic for the industry."

Knowing this, it is hard to overlook the old saw that bookies never lose. Moreover, I tell Dillon that I was at Leopardstown earlier this year to interview the champion jump jockey Tony McCoy. I backed McCoy's

rides in three races, all of which lost, and when I met him he said they never had a prayer of winning anyway. "Betting is a mug's game," McCoy told me. At this, Dillon's cheerful countenance clouds over. "Don't tell Dick Mussell it's a mug's game," he says. "Besides, we run the on-course betting shop at Leopardstown, and we ran out of both money and cheques that day. We had to tell the punters to come back for their winnings the next day, which pleased them, actually. They would rather go to the pub and say Ladbrokes couldn't afford to pay them than have the money to buy a round."

Dillon is a betting man himself. He bets very selectively, and with slightly more prudence than the man who wrote to Ladbrokes asking what price they would give on him being abducted by aliens and returned to earth as a giant yellow teapot. "I have very good discipline," says Dillon. "I can go weeks without, then have two in half an hour." He knows, of course, who most of the high rollers are. "But sometimes people come out of the ground," he says. "Like the guy who put £80,000 in cash on Shergar to win the Derby, or the fella who came in with a Halifax Building Society draft for 50 grand, and put it on Carvill's Hill to win the Gold Cup. That was the original placing your house on one."

The biggest single bet he can re-

call had nothing to do with sheepskin nosebands. "We took a credit bet of £2 million at even on Brazil to win the 1994 World Cup in 90 minutes or normal time. They didn't, although there was a worrying moment when the ball came off the post and into the Italian goalie's hands." Meanwhile, Dillon must be the only Manchester United supporter hoping that United leave Milan with nothing better than a 0-0 draw tonight. "That would suit us great. We want United in the semi-final but punters don't bet on nil-nil. The last game was the worst possible result for us, because Dwight Yorke scoring the first goal and a score of 2-0 was the most popular double. We lost about £250,000 on that match."

Ladbrokes will also lose a significant amount of money if a female jockey wins next month's Grand National. In 1989, a punter bet £900 in doubles and trebles on Cliff Richard being knighted (4-1), a Brit becoming world heavyweight boxing champion (10-1), and a female jockey winning the National (33-1), all by the year 2000. He has already won £11,000 and stands to win a further £128,000 if the third leg of his treble comes off. Indeed, he has offered certain trainers £50,000 of his winnings to give a woman a top ride. "Luckily he has no possible chance in the world," says Dillon. He pines, as if to reassure himself. "No, no, no possible chance in the world."

Mystery of the Orient

Sir: I refer to the statement in today's newspaper (early editions, 15 March) headed: "Frank Warren (promoter and Leyton Orient chairman)".

I take this as a serious libellous and scandalous statement! I would not go and watch Leyton Orient upon the pain of death. FRANK WARREN
Sports Network Europe, Hertford

Draw your own conclusion

Sir: Your main article on Saturday's fight couldn't have been further from the truth. I am an English expatriate living in the US. I paid \$50 (£30) to watch the fight live on HBO.

At the end of the fight, the three commentators (all Americans) including George Foreman, decided the result. One of the commentators said: "Tonight two

judges stole the result." Foreman said: "Tonight I am ashamed to be an American. Britain could at least be proud in the knowledge that Lennox Lewis is the best heavyweight boxer in the world." Finally, the Governor of New York has ordered an investigation by the State athletic commission regarding possible bribery and corruption.

I saw Lennox Lewis dominate the fight. I have no doubt he was robbed. MARTIN IRISH
via e-mail

Crisp put down

Sir: In his article (Pringle's perspective suits Charlton", 13 March) Glenn Moore describes Martin Pringle, the Charlton footballer, as "a dark-skinned Swede with an English name".

It is possible that Mr Moore may have fallen into the common error of believing that Scotland is part of England. Alternatively, he may be unaware that Pringle is in fact one of the most Scottish of names; unlike many of the names widely regarded as being Scottish, its origins are not Irish and can be traced to an identifiable location north of the border. JOHN PRINGLE
Balerno, Midlothian

Hodgson's choice

Sir: Re: "Merseyside on defence over Fowler furore" by Guy Hodgson (12 March). What an excellent article this is. Nothing I have seen or heard to date sums up the feelings of Merseysiders on the good guy-bad guy reporting since the Le Saux-Fowler incident.

To a complete outsider how must all this look? Therein lies the answer. JOHN COWELL
via e-mail

Unwise words

Sir: Today in the *Independent* you quote Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, as saying: "When Italians tell me it's pasta I check under the sauce to see if it is. They are masters of the smokescreen."

Is that not a racist remark and are you not fostering racism by giving space to such remarks? AMINA SAINTCROSS
Wembley, Middlesex

Crying foul

Sir: First I'd like to point out that banter and mind games between

footballers is nothing new. It does not excuse a player giving a forearm smash around the back of another player's head while the ref isn't looking. If, as Richard Williams writes in his article on the front page of last Thursday's *Review*, Graeme Le Saux is as much of a culture vulture as we are led to believe, then surely this educated, informed lad can realise that Fowler was, although very crudely, simply winding him up. Anyone with any common sense could have realised this and for someone so educated to react in such a way is equally out of order.

Based on the report from a friend, Williams then goes on to further character assassinate Fowler; (this is the lad who was commended by UEFA for his honesty against Arsenal last season) leading the reader to

believe that Fowler is nothing more than a money-grabber, having just signed a £40,000 per week contract with Liverpool while Le Saux is an innocent bystander who has a fiery temper, fights with his own teammates and is constantly getting booked and sent off for retaliation all for simply reading the *Guardian*.

On the other hand, you could say Fowler was crude in his method and needs reprimanding. But you could also say that Fowler has resisted the money-grabbing Bosman option and instead chosen to earn the living that any other top Premiership player can at the club that brought him up through the ranks, thus proving that clubs and players can still be loyal to each other. BRIAN NICHOLAS
The Wirral

Snob tendency

Sir: Thank you for reinforcing my views on the "glory seekers" who believe that the only football worth watching is League, or preferably Premiership football.

Alan Edge's article on non-League football ("Man marked by an anorak", 15 March), even taking into account its attempts to be humorous, was patronising. If he really believes that non-League games are just the preserve of "anoraks" he can't be going to many non-League games. The vast majority of non-League fans are totally normal and support teams who are connected with where they live or were born. They get as much enjoyment as any League fan and treat the game with more humour and realism.

Mr Edge should use his week ends off from blowing £30 to see "real" football to go and patronise someone else! At your local team you'll get a warm welcome, and the mistakes, and have some fun. If you want to sneer, stay at home. CHRIS HUNTER
Working Supporter and proud of it. PS Well done on your Non-League Notebook. Keep up the good work.

SPORTS LETTERS

Post letters to Sports Desk at 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL and include a daytime telephone number. Faxes to 0171 293 2894 or e-mail to sport@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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Parma's panache banishes Bordeaux

Morris in Pitman hands over the reins

THE GENERAL SECRETARY of the British Boxing Board of Control, John Morris, has called for a world body to bring order to the sport.

Morris has campaigned for five years to establish a Fifa-style organisation to oversee championship bouts. The debate over Evander Holyfield's controversial division-heavyweight championship draw with Lennox Lewis has led to calls for a worldwide reform.

Morris believes a world governing body could be established with powers to enforce rules in the conduct of title fights, although promoters would still be allowed to make the deals and stage the bouts.

"Fifa's job is to safeguard its sport so that everyone can get the benefit of it and in boxing we have to project our sport in the best possible way," he said.

Morris argues that the World Boxing Council, World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation, the three organisations involved in the New York controversy, are sanctioning rather than governing bodies. Each has its own regulations and a streamlined approach is needed, particularly in the United States where boxing is run by state commissions.

Morris feels a world regulatory body would have responsibility for medical provision, fight rules and the selection of judges and their supervision. He feels neutral judges are needed.

"Four or five years ago I, and the then (BBBC) president, Sir David Hopkins, wrote to all the major administrators calling on them to co-operate and we had a lot of support. There was a very favourable reaction from Japan and states within America who have benefited greatly from the work of the Association of Boxing Commissions."

"The whole set-up has improved in the US and the ABC is a far more forceful body which is defending the interests of the sport. But what is needed is funding and top professional administrators."

Greg Wood on a woman who broke into a turf stronghold and established her own Garrison

THEY CALL her the First Lady of Aintree, but it was at Cheltenham yesterday that Jenny Pitman, perhaps the most famous racehorse trainer in the country, chose to announce her retirement. Her son, Mark, will take over the licence at Weathercock House, in Lambourn, before the start of the next National Hunt season. As she delivered the news in an interview which was broadcast to the packed Festival enclosures, both mother and son were in tears.

It is just a few months since Pitman revealed that she had successfully fought off cancer, but she said that the illness had not influenced her decision. "I am happy to say that it is nothing to do with my health," she said. "I am not ill, but this seems the right time for Mark to take over. I'm not really retiring, but I won't be playing centre forward any more. I shall be on the subs' bench. I've hardly been anywhere outside this country apart from Ireland and Spain and Italy. I would love to see the big races in Australia and the United States and Dubai."

Cheltenham has featured prominently in Pitman's 24-year training career, most famously when she became the first - and so far only - woman to train a Gold Cup winner with the success of Burrough Hill Lad in 1984. Seven years later, Garrison Savannah won the same race, with her son in the saddle, but the following season Pitman was the focus of less flattering publicity.

She was accused of running Golden Freeze, a 150-1 hope, in the Gold Cup simply to upset the hot favourite, Carville's Hill, and thereby increase the chance of her other runner, Toby Tobias. She was cleared of any malpractice at a Jockey Club inquiry, but among the thousands of punters who backed Carville's Hill, the memory can still raise hackles.

"I wanted to make the announcement here at Cheltenham because of the wonderful warmth everyone here has shown to me over the years," Mrs Pitman said yesterday. "I have so many marvellous memories of Cheltenham. It would be very nice if I could go out with a winner at my final Festival as a professional trainer, but it wouldn't be the end of the world if I didn't."

For a few strides after the last fence in the William Hill National Hunt Chase, it seemed that Naheen Lad had read the script, but he could not find a final effort to take him past Betty's Boy and Island Chief, and finished only third. But Mrs Pitman does have a runner, Ginger Fox, in the County Hurdle on Thursday - the last race of the meeting. It will be a popular choice with punters.

There will be a tearful parting from Aintree two next month. Pitman trained two Grand National winners, Corbiere (1983) and Royal Athlete (1985), and also saddled Esha Ness, who passed the post first in the void National of 1993. She is also one of only two trainers to have a complete set of Nationals, in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Mark Pitman was his mother's assistant until setting up as a trainer in his own right in 1997. He plans to train about 80 horses at Weathercock House, including 35 recruits from his current yard.

"Mother has been one of the best-known people in the game," he said. "She transcends racing and is known by every man and woman in the street. She has always been straight and told the truth and those are her ideals. I hope I'll be able to uphold them. I am going to be the captain of a very big ship and we won't be looking to be just among the best in Lambourn. We want to be among the best three stables in the country."

After pausing to compose himself, he added: "I shall give it my best shot and carry on the way mother wants me to. This is the end of an era. I have ridden for mother, been her assistant trainer and we have been closely involved for a long time. If a door doesn't open she will try and open it politely. But if it still doesn't open she'll kick it down."

The sturdiest door which Pitman pushed against was the one which insisted that training racehorses was a man's job. It was, inevitably, a match for her, and the many successful female trainers in Britain today are in her debt.



A tearful Jenny Pitman announcing her retirement to crowds at Cheltenham yesterday David Ashdown

THE JENNY PITMAN FILE

Born: 11 June, 1946, one of seven children in a Leicestershire farming family.

Early career: Left school at 15 to work as stable girl for Chris Taylor, married Richard Pitman and bought a yard at Filton Parva to train hunter chasers and point-to-pointers. Re-married (to David Stait) in 1967.

First trainers' licence: 1975.

First winner under rules: Bordon at Southwell on 25 August 1975.

Cheltenham Gold Cup Chase winners: Burrough Hill Lad (1984), Garrison Savannah (1991).

King George VI Chase winner: Burrough Hill Lad (1984).

Grand National Handicap Chase winners: Corbiere (1983), Royal Athlete (1985).

Scottish National Handicap Chase winner: Wilsford (1995).

Welsh National Handicap Chase winners: Corbiere (1982), Burrough Hill Lad (1983), Stasbury (1986).

Irish Grand National Handicap Chase winner: Mudahim (1987).

Midlands National Handicap Chase winners: Watatella (1977), Wilsford (1990).

Other big winners: Busche Giorod (Massey Ferguson Gold Cup 1990), Gainsay (Ritz Club Chase 1987), Infelence (Supreme Novices' Hurdle 1996), Master Tribe (Ladbrokes 1997), Mighty Mogul (Persian War Novices' Hurdle 1992), Mudahim (Racing Post Chase 1997), Naheen Lad (Sun Alliance Chase 1996), Princiful (Stayers' Hurdle & Long Walk Hurdle 1996).

1998: Awarded OBE for services to racing in the New Year's Honours list.

TODAY'S NUMBER

107,000

The number of spectators - a capacity crowd - expected in Sydney's new Olympic Stadium for the Australia v New Zealand rugby union game in the Bledisloe Cup in August. Only 2,200 tickets remain unsold. The world record is 95,000.

FORM VERDICT

Plenty of reasons to oppose each of the runners but WHEN WARRIOR is weighted to win a race of this nature on the balance of his place and form and he has a lead over the rest of the field. He should be seen to win but he may be overdone at today's trip, while Tom Pinch must go again if he is jumping holes up.

3.30 GETCHEL WINDS LAD HCP

1. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
2. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
3. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
4. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
5. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
6. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
7. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
8. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
9. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
10. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0

FORM VERDICT

A tricky race full of horses that don't win very often. With the first stable coming back to form it could be worth chasing the winner HOLD YOUR RANKS who has won six times round here and didn't run too badly over an inadequate 2m here last month.

4.20 A J BLACKLER PEUGEOT PARTS MAIDEN HURDLE (E) £3,000 2m 6f

1. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
2. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
3. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
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4.10 THURLEIGH HANDICAP HURDLE

1. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
2. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
3. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
4. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0
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10. 25-20 ALBA INTERNATIONAL (2) (2) M P Dwyer 7 2-0

HYPERION

1.50 Real Fire 2.20 The Red Rector 2.55 Tom Pinch 3.30 Alka International 4.10 Setze The Day 4.40 Trouble Ahead 5.15 Club Sandwich

GOING: Soft (Good to Soft in places).

Light-headed, level, course in 200yds.

Course is at junction of A1 and A904, Huntington station (service from London, King's Cross) in. ADVERTISEMENT: 25 all services today only. Call 01904 251111.

FIVE-YEAR STATISTICS

LEADING TRAINERS: K. Bailey 19-50 (20%), G. Hubbard 17-28 (20%), M. W. W. 15-11 (20%), J. Gifford 14-7 (17%), R. 13-11 (17%), J. 12-11 (17%), J. 11-11 (17%), J. 10-11 (17%), J. 9-11 (17%), J. 8-11 (17%), J. 7-11 (17%), J. 6-11 (17%), J. 5-11 (17%), J. 4-11 (17%), J. 3-11 (17%), J. 2-11 (17%), J. 1-11 (17%), J. 0-11 (17%).

FAVOURITES: 37-50 (44%).

LONG DISTANCE: 1000m (2000m) 25-20 miles. BLINKERED FIRST TIME: 25-20, 10-11, 5-11, 2-11, 1-11.

HYPERION

1.55 True Fortune 2.25 Blue Blazer 3.05 Fleet-Ing Mandate 3.45 Tight Fist 4.20 Purple Ace 4.55 Ticket To The Moon 5.30 Stretching

GOING: Soft.

Left-hand, sharp, course with short run-in.

Course is in N. of town on A904. Newmarket station in. ADVERTISEMENT: 25 all services today only. Call 01904 251111.

FIVE-YEAR STATISTICS

LEADING TRAINERS: M. P. 19-50 (20%), G. Hubbard 17-28 (20%), M. W. W. 15-11 (20%), J. Gifford 14-7 (17%), R. 13-11 (17%), J. 12-11 (17%), J. 11-11 (17%), J. 10-11 (17%), J. 9-11 (17%), J. 8-11 (17%), J. 7-11 (17%), J. 6-11 (17%), J. 5-11 (17%), J. 4-11 (17%), J. 3-11 (17%), J. 2-11 (17%), J. 1-11 (17%), J. 0-11 (17%).

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GOING: Soft.

Left-hand, sharp, course with short run-in.

Course is in N. of town on A904. Newmarket station in. ADVERTISEMENT: 25 all services today only. Call 01904 251111.

FIVE-YEAR STATISTICS

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